

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or AWAKENED INDIA*

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



October 2019

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# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Science of the Perfect Man*

Each man in his childhood runs through the stages through which his race has come up; only the race took thousands of years to do it, while the child takes a few years. The child is first the old savage man—and he crushes a butterfly under his feet. The child is at first like the primitive ancestors of his race. As he grows, he passes through different stages until he reaches the development of his race. Only he does it swiftly and quickly. Now, take the whole of humanity as a race, or take the whole of the animal creation, man and the lower animals. There is an end towards which the whole is moving. Let us call it perfection. Some men and women are born who anticipate the whole progress of mankind. Instead of waiting and being reborn over and over again for ages until the whole human race has attained to that perfection, they as it were, rush through them in a few short years of their life. And we know that we can hasten these processes, if we be true to ourselves. Now can we not hasten the growth of individuals? We can. Can we put a limit to the hastening? We cannot say how much a man can grow in one life. You have no reason to say that this much a man can do and no more. Circumstances can hasten him wonderfully. Can there be any limit then, till you come to perfection? That perfect man that is to come perhaps millions of years hence can come today. And this is what the Yogis say, that all the great incarnations and prophets are



such men; that they reached perfection in this one life. Even this hastening of the growth must be under laws. Suppose we can investigate these laws and understand their secrets and apply them to our own needs; it follows that we grow. We hasten our growth, we hasten our development, and we become perfect even in this life. This is the higher part of our life, and the science of the study of mind and its powers has this perfection as its real end. Helping others with money and other material things and teaching them how to go on smoothly in their daily life are mere details. The utility of this science is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean. The science wants you to be strong, to take the work in your own hand, instead of leaving it in the hands of nature, and get beyond this little life. That is the great idea.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.16-17.

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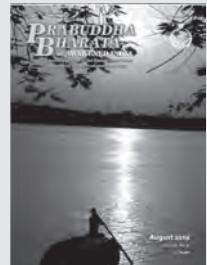
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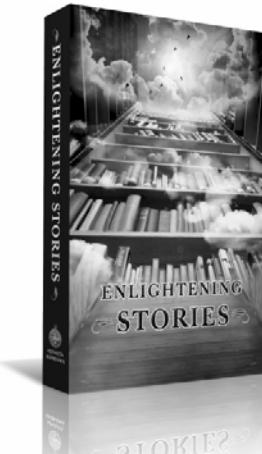
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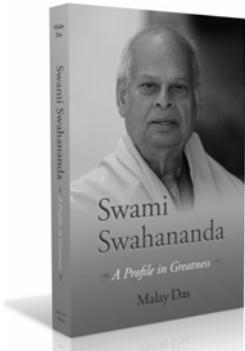
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by Dr. Malay Das

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In this intimate, loving portrait, Dr. Malay Das presents Swami Swahananda as he knew him during the last seventeen years of the swami's life. We witness the guru's compassionate care for devotees and disciples, his ability to love with detachment, and his dignity and grace during his final illness.

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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

*Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

October 2019  
Vol. 124, No. 10

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

एवमुक्तवाऽन्तर्हृदयः शाकायन्यस्तस्मै नमस्कृत्वाऽनया ब्रह्मविद्यया राजन् ब्रह्मणः पन्थानमारुद्धाः पुत्राः  
प्रजापतेरिति सन्तोषं द्वन्द्वतिक्षां शान्तत्वं योगाभ्यासादवाप्नोतीत्येतद्दुद्धतमं नापुत्राय नाशिष्याय नाशान्ताय  
कीर्तयेदित्यनन्यभक्ताय सर्वगुणसम्पन्नाय दद्यात् । ॥ ६.२९ ॥

*Evam-uktva-antar-hridayah shakayanyas-tasmai namaskritva'naya brahma-vidyaya rajan  
brahmanah panthanam-arudhah putrah praja-pater-iti santosham dvandva-titiksham  
shantatvam yogabhyasad-avapnoti-ity-etad-guhyatamam naputraya nashishyaya nashantaya  
kirtayed-ity-ananya-bhaktaya sarva-guna-sampannaya dadyat.* (6.29)

Having thus spoken (to Brihadratha) Shakayanya with his heart fixed on the inner self bowed before him and said: 'By this knowledge of Brahman, did the sons of Prajapati ascend the path of Brahman. By the practice of yoga, one gains contentment, forbearance of the dualities of pleasure and pain, and tranquility. Let no one declare this most secret doctrine to any one who is not a son, who is not a pupil, who is not of a tranquil mind. To one who is devoted to none other than his teacher, to one endowed with all qualities, one may give it.' (6.29)

# THIS MONTH

**M**ONASTICISM IS A hoary and time-honoured tradition that has created numerous spiritual luminaries and saints. The monastic traditions of various religions have contributed much to the world. However, occasionally we hear **Voices Against Monasticism**. These voices are analysed and addressed this month.

The reminiscences of people who met Swami Vivekananda are precious to us. They were usually written many years afterwards, and memory has its quirks. Although Swamiji's powerful presence left an indelible imprint in the minds of these narrators, sometimes details about other people who were present in the narrative—such as their names—were forgotten. One reminiscence in particular, like the facet of a jewel, has caught light from a new direction, enhancing its reflection of Swamiji. Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, Missouri, USA describes this reminiscence in **The Swami, the Artist, and the Poet**.

Gopal Stavig, a researcher from Hollywood, USA talks about **The Self-Existence or Aseity of Brahman-God in Indian and Western Thought**.

Dilipkumar Mohanta, former first Vice Chancellor of the Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata, and former Vice Chancellor of Kalyani University, and a senior Professor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta, discusses **Buddha's Teachings and Good Governance**.

In '*Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*': **A Study**, Swami Vanishananda, Ramakrishna Math, Kayamkulam, Kerala, analyses the words

*satyam, jnanam, and anantam* from the second chapter of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* by analysing the commentary of Acharya Shankara, the gloss on it by Anandagiri, and the gloss by Swami Achyuta-krishnananda Tirtha called *Vanamala*.

Swami Vedapurushananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, West Bengal, explains ***Tat Tvam Asi: You Are That***.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month we see what children say about **Fighting Alcoholism**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Guru**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to know its meaning.

Disobedience and insincerity can create great problems between people, especially between a married couple. This is shown in the first instalment of the story **Dharmadatta's Charity**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

Melissa M Littlefield, assistant professor of English and assistant professor of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Jennell M Johnson, assistant professor of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have edited the book **The Neuroscientific Turn: Transdisciplinarity in the Age of the Brain**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# ***Voices Against Monasticism***

**M**ONASTICISM AND the monastics that this tradition has produced have been considered one of the greatest assets of human civilisation. Society has mostly revered this segment of the human population. The main reason for this reverence is the basic feature of monasticism: renunciation. It is quite difficult to live a life of true renunciation. And it is this difficulty that attracts respect from society. Though some faith-traditions or religions do not encourage monasticism, many major world religions celebrate it. The numerous monastic traditions across world religions have a rich and glorious history of saints and spiritual luminaries, who apart from having brought spiritual and psychological solace to countless lives, also made discoveries and inventions of science, and pioneered trends in philosophy, music, and culture.

Monasticism has also been criticised by many religious traditions for many centuries now. Such critique was the result of some serious thinking, which might not be accepted by many people. However, in recent times, we humans tend to ridicule every traditional and cultural institution just for the sake of ridiculing and putting them down. The monastic tradition has also suffered the same fate in the hands of people who become know-it-all just by browsing the Internet and do not care to understand the subtleties and nuances of any thought. It has almost become a fashion nowadays to ridicule monastics. Faced with a dearth of content, the electronic media is too glib in showing down the monastic tradition. Let us analyse some of the major objections against monasticism.

The first and the major objection that is raised against monasticism is that it is an easy escape from the trials of life. This objection comes from not understanding the nature of monastic life, to say the least. Monastic life, contrary to what many would like to believe, is not a life of eating, drinking, and making merry. As the Upanishads

### **Monastic life is a war against the inner tendencies within and temptations without.**

put it and as Somerset Maugham phrased it, it is a life of walking on the 'razor's edge'. It is a constant struggle with the mind and sense organs. Monastic life is a war against the inner tendencies within and a war against temptations without. A monastic life is a life centred in God. A monastic has to be independent of all bondage and completely dependent on God. It is an attempt to experience God, who is the substratum of the universe. It is easier to live a worldly life and face its trials with the hope of pleasures than to abnegate one's ego by surrendering it to God.

What about some monastics who are concerned only with the pleasures of the world? Just as, if some people fail in a highly competitive examination, we do not blame the quality of the examination itself but we understand that those who failed were not up to the mark, similarly when some do not succeed in living up to the high standards of monastic life, we should not blame monasticism itself, but understand that those who failed could not keep up to the ideal.

The second objection to monasticism is that

by becoming a monastic, one shuns one's duty towards one's parents. Here again, one should properly understand why someone becomes a monastic. If one becomes a monastic to cheat others, one ends up cheating oneself, and that kind of renunciation could not be called renunciation proper but could only be termed 'monkey renunciation', which would pull the person to the world sooner or later. One takes to the monastic life only because one finds more joy in God than in the world. Thus, renunciation is the natural giving up of something lower when one gets something higher. Monasticism is a higher calling, higher than the call for serving a nation or a community, the kind of call soldiers get. Therefore, just as soldiers often have to go to distant borders, far away from their parents, for the sake of their country, monastics also have to dive deep into the depths of their inner worlds for finding God. Monasticism is an offering to God by the parents and the monastic much as becoming a soldier is a sacrifice unto the country by the soldier and the parents.

The third and one of the common objections to monasticism is that if all were to become monks what would happen to the institution of marriage and how would the human species procreate. This objection is based on the logical fallacy of generalising a minority in the context of the entire population. It is like objecting to the profession of medicine by saying that if everyone was to become a doctor, who would become an engineer. This reasoning overlooks the obvious fact that all will never become monks and every one will never become a doctor. There are as many perspectives of and choices in life as there are human beings on this planet. Just because some people make a particular choice does not mean that everyone will make the same choice. Hence, it is illogical and unreasonable to say that monasticism goes against the institution of marriage. On the contrary, it could be easily argued that monasticism, which includes

abstinence from procreation, is required to uphold the value and dignity of human procreation.

The fourth objection to monasticism that we would see here is that the monastic vocation is given a place above all other vocations. This objection would be found to be meaningless if we understand why society respects the monastic vocation. It is for the same reason why society respects learned or highly accomplished people. Because they have achieved something that is quite difficult, sometimes impossible, for the others. That is why people respect monastics because the very resolve to lead a monastic life is a great and daunting step. So, the respect that the monastic vocation gets is well-deserved. Some object that the monastic vocation is an imposition on the monastics and that they have to remain monastics all their lives even if they do not want that. This is completely false. Every individual has the freedom to take to monastic life and leave it any time one wants. If someone does not exercise this choice due to fear of public criticism, that is not the fault of monasticism.

One of the important reasons for some people getting worked up on seeing a monastic or while talking about the monastic vocation is their inability to comprehend the reason why most monastics are happy and cheerful while those of the world have to constantly wade their way through the wrinkles of worry and stress. Thus, the worldly suspect that monastics are doing something terribly wrong for them to be happy. But, how can someone be happy in a sustained manner by doing something wrong? The reality is quite the opposite. The monastic vocation identifies the true cause of everything in this universe, rather the cause of the universe itself, to be God. Having thus understood the one truly responsible for everything, the monastic has no cares of the world and devotes one's time in remembering and praying to God.

# **The Swami, the Artist, and the Poet**

**Diane Marshall**

The reminiscences of people who met Swami Vivekananda are precious to us. They were usually written many years afterwards and memory has its quirks. Although Swamiji's powerful presence left an indelible imprint in the minds of these narrators, sometimes details about other people who were present in the narrative—such as their names—were forgotten. By extension, that person's feelings about Swamiji and the circumstances of the moment tend to colour our understanding of that event and of people's responses to him. One reminiscence in particular, like the facet of a jewel, has caught light from a new direction, enhancing its reflection of Swamiji.

It was probably in February of 1896 when Betty Leggett gave a select dinner party at the Metropolitan Club at 60th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City.<sup>1</sup> Swamiji was the honoured guest. The club's palatial Renaissance Revival premises, designed by architects, McKim, Mead, and White, remain an architectural gem of Manhattan. The Metropolitan Club had opened with elite éclat in 1894. The *New York Sun* observed: 'All around the Metropolitan Club, when it opened the other night, were groups of hungry and rather ragged-looking men, gazing upon the throng of well-dressed people who swept into the magnificent edifice, with faces that were keenly and unmistakably envious.'<sup>2</sup> Swamiji was well aware of the class distinctions in American society. He, a sannyasin, might dine at a place like the Metropolitan Club, but a few hours later



*The Metropolitan Clubhouse*

he could sit, contented, on the floor of his rented room on West 39th Street.

The Metropolitan Club was, of course, a gentleman's club. It was Betty Leggett's husband, Francis H Leggett, who was actually a club member. Women were only permitted in designated areas. Swamiji had been invited to gentlemen's clubs before, namely, the venerable Chicago Club, where women could not enter the premises—full stop. This was the progressive 1890s, however, and the Metropolitan Club made some provision for women. The 25 February 1894 *New York Times* described the parts of the club that Swamiji would have seen:

The main doorway, at the northwest corner of the courtyard, opens on a rectangular hallway 24 feet deep by 82 feet wide, with a stairway at the rear leading to the floors above. To the right of this stairway is a sumptuous restaurant, whose large windows overlook the courtyard, directly opposite its entrance. In the rear of the restaurant are two private dining rooms. These three rooms are for the exclusive use of women accompanied by members of the club and their



MAUD STUMM

guests. The rooms are of white and gold. The furniture is of oak.<sup>3</sup>

Maud Stumm, an artist, was one of the guests invited to Betty Leggett's dinner. Maud was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and she moved

to New York about 1888 to study at the Art Students League with Kenyon Cox and H Siddons Mowbray. She also studied art in Paris with Luc-Olivier Merson. She first met Swamiji at a Paris salon in September 1895. In the summer of 1899, she was one of the Leggett's guests at Ridgely Manor while Swamiji was there. Stumm told several charming anecdotes about Swamiji, including his first foray into Western art as she guided his study in crayon of Swami Turiyananda.<sup>4</sup> Years later, at the request of Betty's sister, Josephine MacLeod, Stumm wrote this reminiscence:

Besides this wonderful guest [Swamiji] were three others, one of them the young Boston woman who had taken the prize for the 'Hymn of the Republic' sung at the World's Fair. She was little and sat very erect, with an alert expression. Swami was rolling out Sanskrit and translating the ancient glories of India, nobody *daring* to speak. He dwelt finally upon the spiritual superiority of the Hindu, even today. Thereupon the Boston lady interrupted: 'But, Swami, you must admit that the common people of India are way below the cultivation of the same class in, say Massachusetts; why look at one item—the newspapers!' Swami, recalled from his poetic flight, raised his great eyes and regarded her silently. 'Yes, Boston is a very cultivated place,' he said. 'I landed there once, a stranger in a strange land. My coat was like this red one and I wore a turban. I was proceeding up a street in the busy part

of the town when I became aware that I was followed by a great number of men and boys. I hastened my pace and they did too. Then something struck my shoulder and I began to run, dashing around a corner, and up a dark passage, just before the mob in full pursuit, swept past—and I was safe! Yes,' he concluded, 'Massachusetts is a *very* civilised place!' Even this did not silence the little woman, and with astonishing temerity she raised her voice again to say, 'But, Swami, no doubt a Bostonian in Calcutta would have created just such a scene!' 'That would be impossible,' he replied, 'for with us it is unpardonable to show even polite curiosity to the stranger within our gates, and never open hostility.'

Stumm's story contrasts this educated woman's ignorance of India with Swamiji's first hazardous experience of mob ignorance in Boston. The way Stumm described Swamiji's manner of expression seems quite accurate. She painted a dramatic picture of his command of the conversation—and the respect with which he was regarded. In Stumm's view, the 'Boston woman's' questions were impertinent. Perhaps she *was* opinionated—but she was also *inquiring*. The way Stumm told it, one might think that this 'little woman' should hang her head in shame—but Swamiji's intent was not to embarrass her. There is always more than one side to a story. Swamiji's power of discernment, when he 'raised his great eyes and regarded her silently', should not be underestimated. In this case, I think that the other person's point of view is quite significant. In fact, we have proudly cited her reminiscence of Swamiji without connecting her to this occasion.

The identification of this prize-winning hymn writer was a bit of a puzzle. Stumm's memory had been concentrated on Swamiji's vivid presence. She could not recall his questioner's name. What poem or song by a Bostonian won a prize at the World's Fair? Any googling of 'Hymn

of the Republic' reveals only that Julia Ward Howe's 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' was sung innumerable times in 1893, but the elderly Howe does not fit Stumm's description. Perhaps 'Hymn of the Republic' was not the actual title of the song or poem in question. Better to ask, what prize-winning poet did Betty Leggett know?

Harriet Monroe had written the 'Columbian Ode' for the opening of the World's Fair.<sup>6</sup> She won the commission and prize of \$1,000 for her poem, and this event established her national reputation as a poet. Monroe's poem was of a respectable length. At the Dedication Day ceremony on 21 October 1892, the New York actor, Sarah Cowell Le Moyne, recited it. A choir of 5,000 sang additional stanzas arranged by Boston composer George W Chadwick. Monroe, however, was definitely from Chicago, not Boston.

Most people had heard of the 'Columbian Ode,' but they could not recite it from memory the way every schoolchild could recite the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'. More famous than the 'Columbian Ode' itself was the fact that Monroe had filed a lawsuit over violation of her author's rights against a big city newspaper—and won.

A contract had been signed to publish the 'Columbian Ode' in Chicago, but the *New York World* jumped in and published it early—with errors—despite being warned not to. Monroe, a lowly poet, a mere woman, had the guts to sue *The World*. A verdict in her favour came in 1894, but it was not until 12 March 1896 that the US Circuit Court of Appeals awarded her damages of \$5,000. Monroe was in New York pending the outcome of her case. Rival newspapers crowded her victory. She was definitely a celebrity.

What connection did Monroe have to Boston? There are several possibilities. Monroe had written a biography of John Wellborn Root that was soon to be published in Boston by

Houghton Mifflin Company.<sup>7</sup> Finding an artist to illustrate the book was part of her purpose in New York.<sup>8</sup> Monroe was a correspondent for the *Chicago Times-Herald*, so she was working in New York, writing reviews of plays and art. She had recently visited the studio of sculptor Daniel Chester French in Lower Manhattan, and she had written a very positive article about French's commission for a memorial in Boston for Irish-American poet John Boyle O'Reilly.<sup>9</sup> Daniel Chester French had created the grand, golden 'Statue of the Republic' for the 1893 World's Fair [Columbian Exposition]. Everyone had something to say about the Fair. Perhaps the fact that a Boston musician had composed the choral music for 'The Columbian Ode' led to a conflation of Monroe's poem with its hymns, and that mixture lodged in Stumm's mind. Or perhaps just the recollection of the debate over Boston's level of civilisation had fixed Monroe's identity in Stumm's memory as that of being someone from Boston.

Monroe had recently come to New York after visiting her cousin, Charlotte Collier, in Atlanta. There they attended a reception with Bertha Honoré Palmer and other upper-crust Chicagoans. The *Atlanta Constitution* interviewed Monroe and said: 'She is a deep and comprehensive thinker and a new woman in the best sense of the word', but also remarked upon her 'modest, refined little body' and bright face.<sup>10</sup> Other newspapers called her a 'slight girlish figure', a 'mite of a woman', and a 'slender little woman', who 'sits straight'.<sup>11</sup> These descriptors exactly match Stumm's recollection.

The clincher that identifies our mystery poet





Dining Room for Ladies at the Metropolitan Club

is the fact that Harriet's father, Henry Stanton Monroe, was the lawyer who had represented William Sturges, Betty Leggett's first husband, through a four-year-long life-altering lawsuit.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Attorney Edward McCarthy of New York, who fought Harriet Monroe's lawsuit against *The World*, also represented Sturges.<sup>13</sup> Harriet had known Bill Sturges, her father's friend, since childhood.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Betty MacLeod Sturges had known the Monroe family well when she lived in Chicago.<sup>15</sup> Only two days after Sturges's lawsuit hit the front page with 'Sues for Big Money', Henry Monroe's brilliant son-in-law, John Wellborn Root, the architect, who was transforming Chicago, suddenly died on 15 January 1891. In November 1891 Harriet won the commission to write 'The Ode' and on 17 March 1892 her mother died. Attorney Monroe spent a considerable portion of 1892 in London gathering testimony for the Sturges case, and Betty won part of the enormously complicated lawsuit that July. On 25 September the *New York World* published Harriet's poem against her will and she called it 'a flagrant case of journalistic piracy'.<sup>16</sup> On 21 October the 'Columbian

Ode' was read and sung to immense crowds in Chicago. After the World's Fair, on the first day of arbitration in April 1894, Sturges collapsed in the courtroom.<sup>17</sup> In June a judgement was rendered in favour of Mrs Sturges, but by then Mr Sturges's mind had completely disintegrated. He died 11 November 1894.<sup>18</sup> As for Attorney Monroe, Harriet declared the Sturges-Farwell case was 'the last great battle of my father's career'.<sup>19</sup> So, between 1891 and 1894, Betty Sturges and Harriet Monroe had shared tragedy and triumph.

By the time Monroe got her damages award, however, Swamiji was in Detroit. Monroe had seen Swamiji on the opening day of the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893. She wrote an eloquent recollection of it in her autobiography, *A Poet's Life*:

The Congress of Religions was a triumph for all concerned, especially for its generalissimo, the Reverend John H. Barrows, of Chicago's First Presbyterian Church, who had been preparing it for two years. When he brought down his gavel upon the 'world's first parliament of religions' a wave of breathless silence swept over the audience—it seemed a great moment

in human history, prophetic of the promised new era of tolerance and peace. On the stage with him, at his left, was a black-coated array of bishops and ministers representing the various familiar Protestant sects and the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches; at his right a brilliant group of strangely costumed dignitaries from afar—a Confucian from China, a Jain from India, a theosophist from Allahabad, a white-robed Shinto priest and four Buddhists from Japan, and a monk of the orange robe from Bombay.

It was the last of these, Swami Vivekananda, the magnificent, who stole the whole show and captured the town. Others of the foreign groups spoke well—the Greek, the Russian, the Armenian, Mazoomdar of Calcutta, Dharmapala of Ceylon—leaning, some of these upon interpreters. Shibata, the Shinto, bowed his wired white headdress to the ground, spread his delicate hands in suave gestures, and uttered gravely with serene politeness his incomprehensible words. But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze bell; the controlled fervour of his feeling; the beauty of his message to the Western world he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch (136–7).<sup>20</sup>

Considering that Monroe was a poet and a lover of eloquence, what she wrote next sounds odd, even rather opinionated. One wonders the reason for her admitted ‘superstition’:

One cannot repeat a perfect moment—the futility of trying to has been almost a superstition with me. Thus I made no effort to hear Vivekananda speak again, during that autumn and winter when he was making converts by the score to his hope of uniting East and West in a world religion above the tumult of controversy (*ibid.*).

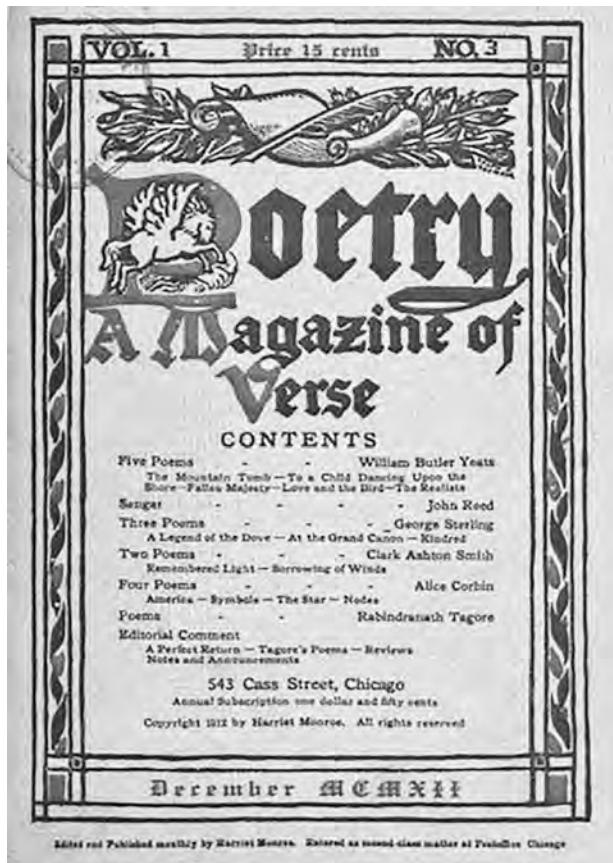


*Photo of Swami Vivekananda by George Prince, New York, 1895*

Monroe went on to say that she met Swamiji again in New York:

Later I knew him quite well, and always I shall remember an encounter and talk years after in Fifth Avenue, when his eyes soared up to the tip of a skyscraper, and he said something which made me realize that all this newness was as romantic to him as the old things to us, and that his vision entrusted to our fresh energies his hope of a more united and glorious world (*ibid.*).

Betty Leggett’s dinner gave Monroe a chance to talk to Swamiji ‘in Fifth Avenue’ and Swamiji’s subtle rebuke was indeed ‘an encounter’. Evidently, their conversation continued. The nearest skyscraper to the Metropolitan Club in 1896 was the seventeen-storey Hotel New Netherland, which was the tallest hotel in the world when it was built in 1893.



Poetry, December 1912

Considered this way, Betty's dinner party grows more interesting. What were the dynamics in that room among the diverse personalities, and what turn did the conversation take after that? Swamiji would not have dismissed a poet outright. He would not have killed the conversation at his friend's party. Had that been the case, Monroe would not have written about him so beautifully in her autobiography. It is important to understand that Monroe was accustomed to interviewing men at a level that was much bolder and more candid than was considered feminine at the time. She told the *Atlanta Constitution* that the new woman was 'more robust in manner, more business-like'.<sup>21</sup>

Monroe's argumentative questions shocked Stumm—who was frankly in awe of Swamiji. Stumm recalled that she had said, 'why look at one item—the newspapers!' Monroe worked for

## POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

### POEMS

#### I

**T**HOU hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger. I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; I forgot that there abides the old in the new, and that there also thou abidest.

Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar. When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the One in the play of the many.

#### II

No more noisy, loud words from me, such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time, and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum.

[ 84 ]

'Tagore Poems,' Poetry, December 1912

newspapers, and their readership was valuable to her. Her point was that even the poor Irish in Boston read the papers and Chicagoans considered Massachusetts the most literate state in the nation. Supposedly literacy was civilising. According to Monroe's recollection, Swamiji continued the conversation. His monastic calling was to teach. Monroe lacked understanding of India, and Swamiji was educating her. He could see her seriousness, determination, and deep artistic nature. Swamiji opened her eyes to the spiritual side of India's civilisation and 'his hope of a more united and glorious world'.

After more than a decade of subsisting by writing columns for newspapers, Monroe finally launched her dream. In 1912 she founded *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. In the first issue, Monroe stated in her editorial: 'The present venture is a modest effort to give to poetry

her own place, her own voice. The popular magazines can afford her but scant courtesy—a Cinderella corner in the ashes.<sup>22</sup> In the second issue, she declared: ‘The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine—may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut’.<sup>23</sup> In the third issue, she featured poems by Rabindranath Tagore sent to her by Ezra Pound. Tagore’s opening lines, printed in the December 1912 issue of *Poetry*, were:

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger. ... Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the One in the play of the many.<sup>24</sup>

Was there a frisson of recognition—a re-ignition—in these words that reminded Monroe of an encounter in Fifth Avenue with an eloquent mystic from India sixteen years earlier? When she conversed with Tagore in Chicago in January 1913 and listened with interest to his ‘talk of Oriental creeds’ and ‘his satirical-humorous observations of Western civilisation’, did she mention her meeting with Swamiji?<sup>25</sup> All we know is that she rejoiced when Tagore won the Nobel Prize for literature in November 1913, feeling that a voice from India had validated her vocation (332). 

### **Notes and References**

1. His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2017) 459–64.
2. *New York Sun*, 2 March 1894, 7.
3. ‘Metropolitan Club’s Palace,’ *New York Times*, 25 February 1894, 17.
4. Stumm refers to ‘crayons’ in her reminiscence. Her drawing of Swamiji at Ridgely Manor has a distinctly chalky texture. I assume she was using Conté crayons, which are both chalky and waxy, traditionally used by artists in France for figure studies. A set of Conté crayons might consist of four or more colours.
5. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, 459–64.
6. Harriet Monroe, *The Columbian Ode* (Chicago: W Irving Way, 1893), frontispiece note; and Harriet Monroe, *A Poet’s Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World* (New York: MacMillan, 1938) 129–30.
7. *Atlanta Constitution*, 17 March 1896, 4.
8. The artist was former Chicagoan Charles F W Mielatz. *Chicago Tribune*, 19 April 1896, 47.
9. Harriet Monroe (for the *Chicago Times-Herald*), ‘The Boyle O’Reilly Monument’, *Hartford Courant*, 4 February 1896, 7.
10. ‘Harriet Monroe, Poet’, *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 December 1895, 4.
11. ‘Wrote Columbian Ode’, *Des Moines Register* (reprinted from *Chicago Daily News*), 5 April 1896, 20.
12. ‘Sues for Big Money’, *Chicago Tribune*, 13 January 1891, 1.
13. ‘Is Told by Letters’, *Chicago Tribune*, 21 April 1894, 2.
14. *A Poet’s Life*, 24.
15. Betty Sturges, along with Harriet Monroe’s father and sisters, attended a reading of her paper on the poetry of Edmund Spenser at the Newberry Library. ‘Poetry of Spenser’, *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 16 February 1894, 5.
16. ‘Flagrant Journalistic Piracy’, *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1892, 9.
17. ‘His Memory Failed Him’, *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 7 April 1894, 9.
18. Sturges died 11 November 1894. Frances Leggett, *Late and Soon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 93.
19. *A Poet’s Life*, 139.
20. Quoted in Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 6 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), 1.85–6.
21. ‘Harriet Monroe, Poet’, *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 December 1895, 4.
22. Harriet Monroe, ‘The Motive of the Magazine’, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, 1/1 (October 1912), 27.
23. Harriet Monroe, ‘The Open Door’, *Poetry*, 1/2 (November 1912), 64.
24. Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Poems I’, *Poetry*, 1/3 (December 1912), 84.
25. *A Poet’s Life*, 320–1.

# **The Self-Existence or Aseity of Brahman-God in Indian and Western Thought**

**Gopal Stavig**

Aseity, from Latin *a* ‘from’ and *se* ‘self’, *aseitas*, means that Brahman-God is self-existent, *svasiddha*, and cannot be caused by another. Brahman-God is the first being. There can be no attribute or quality prior to Brahman-God. And so, Brahman-God cannot participate in any attribute or quality. If it participated in an attribute, it would be a supplementary quality added to its infinite nature. Conversely, finite living beings exist only in as far as they participate in Brahman-God’s being.

In the words of the non-dualistic Vedantic seer-philosopher Acharya Shankara (c. 688–720 or 788–820), ‘Brahman fills everything—beginningless, endless, immeasurable, unchanging, one without a second. In Brahman, there is no diversity whatsoever. Brahman is pure existence, pure consciousness, eternal bliss, beyond action, one without a second. ... Brahman is reality itself; established in its own glory; pure, absolute consciousness, having no equal, one without a second.’<sup>1</sup> ‘Nor can Brahman be derived from a particular form of Existence, as that goes against common experience; for particulars are seen to emerge from the general, as a pot from clay, but not the general from the particulars. Nor can Brahman come out of non-existence, for non-existence is without any substance.’<sup>2</sup>

Hence, for Acharya Shankara, Brahman is self-existent, of its own nature conceived

through itself and consequently exists eternally. Brahman relies on nothing to preserve its existence. Given that Brahman is infinite and one without a second, there is nothing outside of it that could be its cause. As absolute existence-itself, *sat*, Brahman is not an attribute or action or a combination of material elements. It is the necessary existence and exists by necessity as the ultimate uncaused, unconditioned, indeterminate, immutable, indestructible, formless, partless, substratum, *ashraya*, of the finite world. All things are rooted in Brahman receiving their existence from it, while it is rooted in-itself.<sup>3</sup> If Brahman is self-caused, this is in a non-temporal sense, since obviously Brahman cannot exist prior to itself to create itself.

Swami Vivekananda comprehended: ‘Behind the body, behind even the mind, there is the Self-Existent One. He dies not, nor is He born. The Self-Existent One is omnipresent, because He has no form. That which has no form or shape, that which is not limited by space or time, cannot live in a certain place. How can it? It is everywhere, omnipresent, equally present through all of us.’<sup>4</sup> He identified the ‘I am’ with the eternal and immutable Brahman-Atman, immanent Self. The universal ‘I am’, which is the eternal subject, is identical in all people. In Brahman and through Brahman we exist and see and know everything. ‘He dies not. The same voice, “I am, I am”, is eternal,

unchangeable. ... He resides in every soul, and eternally declares, "I am He, I am He" (1.382).

The most universal and highest of all concepts is that of existence. All animate and inanimate entities are subsumed under the broader concept of existence. 'Particulars are to be referred to the general, the general to the more general, and everything at last to the universal, the last concept that we have, the most universal—that of existence. Existence is the most universal concept' (1.370). Brahman is existence-itself, *sat*, and existence is the ultimate and most supreme generalisation we can form (1.381–2; 2.320).

A monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Abhedananda (1866–1939) formulated:

The existence, which is in the chair, is also in the table. Take away the name and form of the table and take away the name and form of the chair, the existence, in these two objects, is the same. ... In the midst of all these changes, the only thing that does not change, is *existence*. Try to understand it. That existence is truth, and it is the reality. The existence is called in Sanskrit '*Sat*', that which *is*. It can never change. It may appear through name and form, but, in reality, it is beyond time and space. It is unchangeable. It is the Absolute or absolute existence. I have already described it as the ocean of Reality. It is the eternal substance, and, in it everything exists. Out of it everything comes, and everything goes back into it at the time of dissolution, says the Upanishads. It is called in Sanskrit the Brahman. The Brahman is the absolute reality as well as the absolute existence of the universe. This Brahman is one without a second.<sup>5</sup>

Everything changes except existence-itself, *sat*, similar to being-itself, and proceeds from it and eventually will return to it.

From the Western perspective, emphasis is



*Swami Abhedananda*

placed on God as the first cause. As St Anselm (1033–1109), the Archbishop of Canterbury put it:

So it follows that all other goods are good through something other than what they are and that this other alone is good through itself. But no good which is good through another is equal to or greater than that good which is good through itself. Hence, only that good which alone is good through itself is supremely good ... Since, then, all existing things exist through one thing, without doubt this one thing exists through itself ... whatever exists through something other [than itself] exists less than that which alone exists through itself and through which all other things exist. ... this is supremely good, supremely great, the highest of all existing things.<sup>6</sup>

Both St Augustine and St Anselm defend divine aseity on the grounds that dependence on another is always an imperfection and hence must be excluded from our conception of God.

St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) indicated:

That which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one



*St Thomas Aquinas: An altarpiece in Ascoli Piceno, Italy,  
by Carlo Crivelli, 15th century*

time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.<sup>7</sup>

God alone is actual being through His own essence, while other beings are actual

beings through participation, since God alone is actual being identical with His essence. Therefore, the being of every existing thing is His proper effect. And so, everything that brings something into actual being does so because it acts through God's power.<sup>8</sup>

Since in God there is no potentiality as shown above, it follows that in Him essence does not differ from existence. Therefore His essence is His existence. Thirdly, because, just as that which has fire, but is not itself fire, is on fire by participation; so that which has existence but is not existence, is a being by participation. But God is His own essence, as shown above; if, therefore, He is not His own existence, He will be not essential, but participated being. He will not therefore be first being—which is absurd. Therefore God is His own existence, and not merely His own essence.<sup>9</sup>

Every created thing has its being through another; otherwise, it would not be caused. ... since every form and act is in potentiality before it acquires being. Therefore, it belongs to God alone to be His own being, just as it pertains to Him only to be the first agent. Moreover, being itself belongs to the first agent according to His proper nature, for God's being is His substance.<sup>10</sup>

God is not a contingent entity that comes into existence by participating in something else, which would make his existence only possible and not necessary. Nothing can be added to or subtracted from the divine essence or substance.<sup>11</sup> If there was no necessary being, then over infinite time everything would die and there would be nothing left to cause something else to exist.

Alfred Edward Taylor (1869–1945) explains:

The unending regress from conditioned to conditions, however, naturally suggests the thought that the process of explanation would be completed if we could find something ultimate, itself unconditioned but the

condition of everything else. Thus we arrive at the notion of a being which ‘exists necessarily’ and contains in itself the explanation of everything else, the one and only being which is not contingent (*i.e.* a consequence of something other than itself). Next, it occurs to us that, if there is such a ‘necessarily existing’ being, it must, as the condition of everything else, contain in itself all that is truly real or positive; what is real in all limited and finite things must come to them from It. Thus we identify the *ens necessarium* with the *ens realissimum*.<sup>12</sup>

### **Discussion on Aseity**

From one standpoint, unconditioned self-existence is the initial intrinsic and essential variable, since from a logical standpoint existence is primary, given that an entity must first exist before it can possess any of the other attributes. More religious literature has been devoted to proving the existence of Brahman-God, than to any of its other attributes. The emphasis here is on the dichotomous ‘that’ of existing, and not the ‘what’ of existence that describes the entity’s nature. Existence like substance and thought are primary entities. You cannot have an empirical quantity, quality, relation, or form without a substance; nor reasoning, perception, willing, or feeling without thought.

A necessary truth is one whose negation implies a contradiction. An analytic statement such as a law of logic or mathematics—for example, all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal—is certainly a necessary truth. But can an existential statement such as Brahman-God or anything else exists be a necessary truth proven by reason alone?

The doctrine of aseity teaches that Brahman-God is uncreated and not caused by another entity. Brahman-God’s attribute

of aseity is based on its self-sufficiency and independence of everything else, on its control over all things and the dependence of all else on its creative and sustaining activity. It is self-sufficient, *a se* or *aseita* meaning it is of, through, and from itself.

Thus Brahman-God is:

(a) Self-existent, unconditioned, causally depending on nothing else for its existence, independent of and unqualified by any other reality. Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) asked the pertinent question: ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ One answer is because uncaused Brahman-God exists necessarily and cannot not exist and proceed to create a universe.

(b) Necessarily existent, ‘that which cannot not exist’ and so its non-existence is a logical impossibility. Conversely, a contingent being might or might not exist. If it does, it is brought from potential existence into actual existence by way of a cause that is external to its nature.

(c) Primordially existent, since everything else is causally dependent on it. By definition, Brahman-God is the supreme Being, so if something else caused it, that entity would be the first cause. If Brahman-God participated in space, time, or causation, they would have to precede it and exist independent of it in some sense. If wisdom, power, or goodness were distinct from Brahman-God, then it would be dependent on them. As the philosopher Alvin Plantinga says: ‘If there had been no such thing as wisdom, he [Brahman-God] would not have been wise.’<sup>13</sup> Since nothing precedes it either ontologically or chronologically, the aseity of Brahman-God provides the foundation for all existence and all beliefs. The perfections of Brahman-God must be necessary and part of its eternal inherent nature and not the result of random chance factors.

To fulfil these conditions, Brahman-God as necessary existence must be eternal—since it cannot cease to exist; infinite—else it would be limited by some other finite entity; one—as there can only be one infinite, else they would limit each other; transcendent—existing apart from the world; and simple, non-dual—since if it were a compound, it might disintegrate and perish.

Within the phenomenal world, necessary existents include abstract objects like quantity, quality, relation, and substance which every object has; and numbers, properties, and propositions. Their specific manifestations are contingent and not necessary at all. For example, an orange tree might have a quantity of none or fifty oranges depending on the circumstances.

As Swamiji stated:

In asking what caused the Absolute, what an error we are making! To ask this question we have to suppose that the Absolute also is bound by something, that It is dependent on something; and in making this supposition, we drag the Absolute down to the level of the universe. For in the Absolute there is neither time, space, nor causation; It is all one. That which exists by itself alone cannot have any cause. That which is free cannot have any cause; else it would not be free, but bound. ... Freedom means independence of anything outside, and that means that nothing outside itself could work upon it as a cause.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, because Brahman-God has the attribute of aseity, it has complete freedom and is undetermined in every respect.

Brahman-God provides the ontological foundation for the created world. It is sovereign over all things, meaning that everything depends on it. Brahman-God depends on nothing else for its existence and is not dependent on or conditioned by the world

in any way. It is immune to external influences, not being made to be what or how it is by anything other than itself. *Saguna* Brahman, personal God, is self-existent, except for the fact that it cannot exist without *nirguna* Brahman that ontologically precedes it as its foundational cause. 

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# Buddha's Teachings and Good Governance

Dilipkumar Mohanta

The canonical literature that is composed in Pali contains the basic teachings of the Buddha. Naturally, the question arises whether there is any teaching that deals with the principles of good governance. What would be an ideal picture of good polity according to the Buddha's teachings? Do they have any relevance for good governance today?

In the *Digha Nikaya*, we see a discourse named 'The Lion's Roar of a Universal Monarch', *Chakkavatti-sihanada Sutta*,<sup>1</sup> where we come across some discussion on good polity. It refers to a universal monarch coming in a long line of such monarchs, whose authority rested on their being righteous, *dhammika*. In consultation with the ministers and counsellors, the king was advised to institute the righteous means of security, protection, and guard for the people to take all measures to improve their economic conditions. For the Buddha, the unequal distribution of wealth causes the evil of unrest in society. The Buddha thus teaches how to prevent this evil through the practice of *shila*, conduct, called *adattadanaviramani*. This paves the way for distributive justice in society.

The Buddhist political philosophy is based on certain moral values and it does not divide society into two exclusive camps of 'we' and 'other', but unites all in a comprehensive system based on the relational self, *anatta*. In such a political state of affairs, the issue of development is automatically gifted with the notions of sustainability and totality. If individuals are morally trained and uplifted, then society can retain the stream of development in a sustainable

manner. The practice of religion consists of 'mercy and charity, truth and purity, kindness and goodness'. The shortest way to express the Buddha's teachings is to 'be rational and be moral'. Nothing should be believed merely on speculation. These are the keys to happiness. The teachings of the Buddha have great relevance today in solving many problems we face in a modern polity.

It is indeed true that we are living in an interdependent and interconnected world. But those who are in power usually not only ignore this interdependence but also do not want to recognise this interconnectedness. As a result, we see around us actions without honesty and integrity, and with selfishness. Consequently, what is called distributive justice is frequently being denied to the weaker section of people in society and this is more or less true in politics both at the national and international levels. We also see today that often the 'norms, values, and rules' followed by the majority or the power-elites become legitimate and legal. We see politics to be without any moral and spiritual values, but to be an instrument for getting power. People are making wealth without working. Most of those who are in political power are almost looting their country.

We witness commerce without any ethics. As a result, the gap between the poor and the rich has been widening day by day. People are exclusively guided by the materialistic pursuit of power, profit, and pleasure, the three p's, as if the only philosophy is that if you are politically powerful, you will make profit and

have the ultimate pleasure, the highest value for a materialistic civilisation. Instead of considering ‘cooperation as a social value’ people exercise ‘competition as the only valuable mode’ in social life. Consequently, we have corrupt individuals, corrupt society, and corrupt administration. Like everything else, corruption too has a cause. And when the top-ranking person or office in any society becomes corrupt, the entire society becomes a victim of suffering from corruption.

That is why the Buddha proposes to build a good society with good individuals, and there can be good individuals only if their character is built with moral training. And therefore, if any reformation is needed, it is to be started with the individual and it must be initiated in polity with the top ruling community. Buddhism prescribes five precepts for each individual. These precisely tell us the oughts and ought-nots. The five precepts are to abstain from killing; stealing; sexual and sensual misconduct; speaking a lie, using slandering and harsh words and talkativeness; and intoxication.<sup>2</sup> Besides these, there are four pursuits of life such as loving-kindness, *maitri*; compassion, *karuna*; empathetic joy, *mudita*; and equanimity, *upeksha*.<sup>3</sup> The first three are called *bhavanas*, because they put one’s thought to action, ‘making-become’ and the last one is known as *bhavana-ansha* as it is inclined to action without *tanha*, attachment.

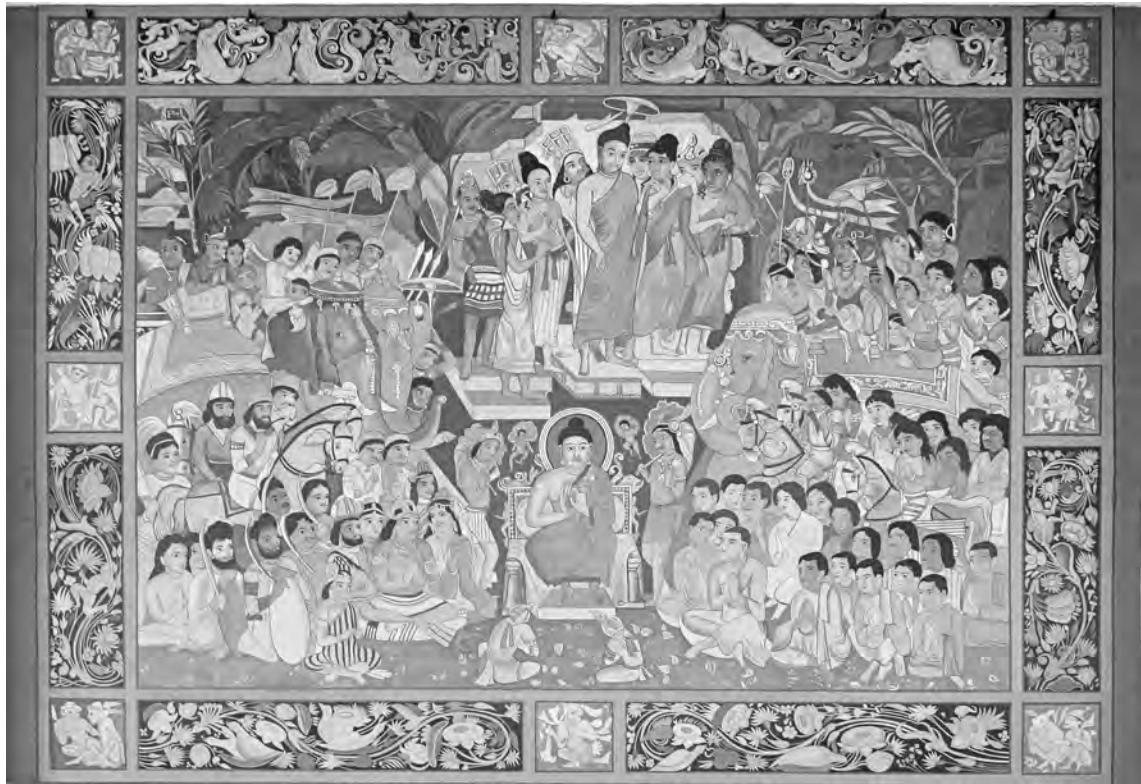
The caring attitude that has been advocated in the Buddha’s teachings is not only good for individuals but also relevant in today’s democratic governance, for addressing environmental crisis, which owes its origin to the satisfaction of the greed of human beings, and as a whole, our very way of life. The law of mutual interdependence is the explanation of the cause of evils and it is also the clue for the eradication of evils. It proposes to reshape the categorical understanding of the

‘I-other’ relationship, not as mutually exclusive, but as complementary to each other. It teaches democratic values of people’s right to diversity of culture and encourages self-criticism, self-restraint through the practice of precepts, *shila*, and increases one’s range of choices.

The Buddha asked people to be reflective and critical before accepting any view and not to be dogmatic. What others are saying is important to listen. The Buddha speaks of openness and flexibility and the avoidance of all kinds of extremism as he very often says that ‘truth lies in the middle’. ‘Oh monks! Please don’t accept my teaching just out of sheer reverence to me but accept it after critically examining it just as the genuineness of gold is determined by burning it in fire.’<sup>4</sup> We also read in the *Kalama Sutta*:

Kalamas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher’. When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and to suffering’—then you should abandon them.<sup>5</sup>

What the Buddha said for the householders has a deep significance even today. Exercise of morality and reasoning are two sure marks of a good life. We can be righteous only by doing righteous acts. They are called *vikalpa-yajna*, the alternative sacrifice; it is the act of giving up one’s greedy actions. The precept of ‘not taking anything that is *not* due to oneself’ is meant to keep society free from corruption. Buddhism does not permit political action that is not based on moral principles. It does not permit acquiring wealth without working. It is against all kinds of commerce or business



where ethics is not followed. It does not only encourage the individual to earn one's bread but also encourages one to be vigilant of oneself so that one could maintain one's livelihood without causing any harm to and exploitation of others.

If these Buddhist principles could be extended to the political affairs at the national and international spheres, then most of the problems arising out of corruption could be considerably reduced, even if not completely removed. Regarding the precept of abstaining from speaking lie, the Buddha says: 'Don't speak lie; don't encourage to speak lie; don't sanction if lie is spoken in a policy-making body.' Similarly, the Buddha advises not to use any harsh and slandering speech, not to encourage any such speech, and also not to sanction any such speech. This part about avoiding the sanctioning of such speech is a necessary condition for any successful democracy. If the ruling class is well-educated

about the five precepts and four pursuits of life as taught by the Buddha, there will be little chance for the deterioration of peace in society, because speaking the untruth creates discord amongst people, making one another's foe by distorted or doctored speech.

So, not speaking the untruth, not slandering others, not using harsh speech, and avoiding talkativeness or irrelevant speech, purify one's character. On the positive side, these practices speak of one's obligation for maintaining mutual trust, cooperation, and understanding among individuals, groups, communities, and at large, amongst humanity. Again, 'the precept of not taking what is not given or due to oneself' is very important. It does not sanction any kind of deceptive practice like bribery, dishonest earning, and so on, nor does it sanction anything illegal in the favour of any person. It also suggests respecting others' rights and possessions. This

teaching helps society to maintain integrity and reduces inequality among members.

The practice of this precept helps to keep society free from corruption at large. Abstention from excessive possession by dishonest means keeps the society ‘corruption-free’ and this in turn helps in its development and progress. The precept of not killing negatively implies non-injury to others and positively implies the recognition of the value of other’s life. It propagates a sense of closeness and caring attitude to the entire human family.

The basic precepts of Buddhism have been extended to the notion of ideal governance in the form of the ‘Discourse on the Lion’s Roar of a Universal Monarch’. The Buddhist socio-political ideal of good governance is integrally connected with and founded on its philosophy of interdependence and middle path. All kinds of bad governance have their roots in moral degradation in both the individual and society. On top of both the individual and society is the king—the governing body of either the presidential or the parliamentary form of government today. All kinds of mismanagement or bad governance, all kinds of unrighteousness have some causal conditions, that is to say, they are conditionally originated like other events and therefore, to address these problems we have to remove these causal conditions.

There are three roots of all unrighteous actions, *akushala-mulam*: greed, *lobha*; hatred, *dvesha*; and delusion, *moha*. All kinds of violence, all kinds of sufferings, all kinds of maladjustment, bad governance, and mismanagement are the effects of any of these three roots. The Buddha proposes to reform the individual and society, initially through moral education and a culture of distributive justice and caring ethics that is predominantly based on the attitude of ‘belongingness’ instead of ‘possession’. And this is

the background of the Buddha’s advice for good governance expressed in *Chakkavatti-sihanada Sutta*. Now let us elaborate the interpretative arguments of the text.

In this narrative, there are thirty-three small paragraphs containing the teachings in Pali. In this dialogue, the king is advised to institute righteous means of security, protection, and guard for the people, to take all measures to improve their economic conditions. In other words, it speaks of a socio-political atmosphere when the king does not create opportunities, because of which poverty, *daridra*, becomes rampant. Ordinarily, it is thought that ‘power corrupts’ and ‘absolute power corrupts absolutely’. Primarily, according to Buddhism, it is poverty that corrupts lay people. Inequitable distribution of wealth is the cause of poverty. Those who do not have the basic necessities of life resort to stealing. To avoid punishment, they are compelled to commit other evils such as lying and so on.

It may be objected that since Buddhism contributes to the doctrine of karma, it logically follows that poverty is due to the lack of initiative or entrepreneurship on the part of the person; it is the *karma-phala*, the result of the actions of that person. But this initial passage in the discourse fixes the blame not on the individual, but on society. Maldistribution of wealth by the ruler is considered to be one of the causes of evils in society and this is because of not understanding that everything in this world is interdependent. Nothing in this world, according to Buddhism, is substantial in nature. Everything is dependently originated and therefore, non-substantial, *anatta*, and logically everything is impermanent. Due to ignorance, we think something as independently existent and permanent. We develop a sense of attachment because of the lack of *prajna*, lack of awareness of

the non-substantial nature of things. This is also because of the greed associated with delusion and hatred that cause all violence. The discourse *Chakkavatti-sihanada Sutta* narrates the ways and means to live a harmonious social life as follows.

A man was caught red-handed by the king's guard for stealing something and he was brought to the king. Hearing from the person that it was the lack of basic amenities of life that compelled him to steal, the king orders to provide him with the basic opportunity to acquire some wealth. But another person who heard about it, resorted to stealing with the hope of gaining favour from the king. At last the situation was out of control. Then the king had to meet out with severe punishment for stealing and other crimes. So though the equal distribution of wealth alone serves as a necessary condition, but by no means can it serve as a sufficient condition for the solution of socio-economic problems. It has to go hand in hand with moral progress. Again, good governance does not only mean economics but also principled politics.<sup>6</sup>

According to the teachings of the Buddha, the authority to rule is not a parental or family heritage; rather it has to be earned. This has been instructed by the old king to his son in the narrative of the life of a universal monarch. It is a life of righteousness whereby he would provide the righteous ward and protection, *dhammikam-rakkha-varana-guttim*, for all the subjects including the army, those associated with the warriors, the householders, the villagers, those living in the provinces, ascetics, brahmanas, the beasts of the forest, and the birds of the air. If the authority to rule is not hereditary and is derived from the people, then those very people cannot be sacrificed in the name of law. The administration must consult experts and the moral figures of civil society in policymaking.

The true spirit of good governance cannot permit any law to serve the rulers and deceive the ruled. While adopting punitive measures, the administrative policies and their implementation are to be based on a middle path between extreme severity and total laxity or political populism. Good governance is ruling without harsh punishment with 'red-hot iron-stick'. The relationship between the ruler and the ruled is comparable to one between the parent and the child, where the parent acts with great compassion. In this context, the chief aim of punishment is correction and not revenge. The government should take a decision following the principle of *aparihaniya-dhamma*, conditions of non-decline of welfare, on the basis of consensus and not forcefully on the strength of majority.

The teachings of the Buddha have great relevance in resolving many problems we face even in our modern polity. It seems to be a precursor of the democratic values we need today. To sum up, this sociopolitical philosophy is based on the attitude of belongingness instead of possessiveness, service instead of rule, duties instead of rights. Regarding development, this philosophy speaks of sustainability and totality. It would help to reshape the categorical understanding of 'I'-‘other’ relationship, not as mutually exclusive, but as complementary to each other. It teaches the democratic values of people’s right to the diversity of culture and encourages self-criticism and self-restraint through the practice of precepts and increases one’s range of choices.

When the Buddha speaks of the law of interdependent existence, he, in fact, speaks of multidimensional and pluralistic non-exclusive identity because unidimensional identity necessarily leads to violence. It says, ‘my view is the only true view’. But the Buddha would

say, 'my view is only one of the different possible views' and the 'I'-‘other’ relationship is an interdependent relationship.

Imagine an ideal situation in the parliament, the policymaking body of the state, where people vow not to involve in speaking what is untrue, not encouraging what is untrue, and not sanctioning what is untrue. Imagine the same possibility with regard to other moral precepts. In that case, we should not have any doubt that if we followed this philosophy, our administrative institutions, no matter whether they are democracies or monarchies, would have been much better, and our sufferings in this world would have been reduced to a considerable extent. The administration in this ideal state extends its hands to the distribution of justice with a sense of modesty. It is a state where enjoyment is integrally tied up with a sense of restraint; there is a conscious chain in the mouth of the horses of greed. The Buddhist sociopolitical philosophy prescribes the code of conduct for the ruler in such a manner that it is good not only to the subjects, but is equally good to the people of other kingdoms. The Buddha's teachings could serve as the philosophical foundation for propagating better international relations.

Today in the midst of a materialistic civilisation, we witness a predominantly self-centred attitude. This leads humankind to open competition. Here we see a decline in the human race due to unending conflicts or rivalry. Time has come to rethink about our blind acceptance of the supremacy of materialistic values and its impact on us. Our social and political outlook should raise its bar from unbridled competitive edge to cooperation and empathy. A penchant for competition often raises the animal instinct in us. Animals snatch food from the mouth of others to feed themselves. When this

animal instinct rises among the humankind, the destruction of the human race becomes imminent. The state should be led by persons possessing high wisdom and morality.

The relevance of values like loving-kindness, *maitri*; compassion, *karuna*; empathy, *mu-dita*; and equanimity, *upeksha* are important for generating cooperation. Unless politics is based on morality and politicians are properly educated, bureaucracy infused with corruption will become a stumbling block for the development of the country. So the leaders of the state must be educated and trained in values. This is the ideal of good governance according to the Buddha's teachings. When the moral foundation of any country is weak, it is sure to suffer from political turmoil and be weakened from within. As a result, the economy will worsen. This would have the inevitable outcome of unrestricted manifestation of greed and violence. A rereading of the Buddha's teachings will surely bring solutions to the problems of governance today.



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# 'Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma': A Study

Swami Vanishananda

## Introduction

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* has three chapters. The second chapter called *Brahmananda Valli*, the chapter on the bliss that is Brahman, has nine sections or *anuvakas*. The sentence, 'Satyam jnanam anantam brahma; Brahman is truth, knowledge, and infinite'<sup>1</sup> is the third sentence of the first section of this chapter. The first sentence is: 'Brahmavidapnoti param; the knower of Brahman attains the highest' (*ibid.*). The second sentence is: 'Tadeshabhyukta; here is a verse uttering that very fact' (*ibid.*). According to Acharya Shankara, the first

sentence is 'aphoristic and encapsulates the meaning of the entire second chapter'.<sup>2</sup> A short study of the first sentence aids us in our understanding of the focal third sentence. The first term '*brahmavit*' refers to the knowledge of Brahman and the second term '*apnoti param*' refers to the supreme purpose served by the knowledge of Brahman. This supreme purpose is nothing but the attainment of supreme bliss, synonymous with Brahman.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the knowledge of Brahman, by virtue of its leading to the attainment of the supreme bliss, is something purposeful.

Swami Achyuta-krishnananda Tirtha<sup>4</sup> says in his gloss *Vanamala* on Acharya Shankara's

commentary on the *Taittiriya Upanishad*: ‘By the words “the knower of Brahman” the two experiences of Brahman, “Brahman exists” and “I am Brahman”, are presented in a general and unqualified manner.’<sup>5</sup> The first sentence seeks to define Brahman in a general manner by inducing in the listener two general notions about Brahman: Brahman exists and Brahman is awareness.

This general statement about Brahman is expanded into a specific definition through the third sentence. Acharya Shankara says that ‘this *Rik* mantra is being quoted to show that the attainment of supreme Brahman, spoken of as the result of the knowledge of Brahman by a knower of Brahman, is nothing but the identity with the self of all, which is the true nature of Brahman, beyond all worldly attributes’.

First, we will take up the word ‘Brahman’, which being the noun or substantive, is the most important word in the sentence. Achyuta-krishnananda says in *Vanamala*: ‘Since it is derived from the root “*brihi* meaning expansion”, an ever-growing or expanding entity is spoken of here. Such growth, in the absence of any constraining factors, ends up as something illimitable, infinitely expansive in nature.’ Acharya Shankara says: ‘The three words beginning with *satya* are meant to distinguish Brahman that is the substantive.’ Anandagiri demonstrates that the words *satya*, *jnana*, and *ananta*, control or refine the meanings of the other two adjectives. Before discussing the meaning of the words, it is imperative to understand the methodology of interpreting the words and the sentence.

### **Two Models of Interpreting the Sentence**

There are two models of interpreting the sentence ‘*Satyam jnanam anantam brahma*’:

**The ‘blue lotus’ model** • The word ‘blue-lotus’ indicates that among the many differently-coloured lotuses, the lotus referred to is not of any

colour other than blue. Here the adjective ‘blue’ is said to primarily act as a differentiator, *vyavartaka*, distinguishing a blue-coloured lotus from a group of many differently-coloured lotuses. This is called *sajatiya-vyavritti*, differentiation within a class.

Does the relevant sentence follow this model? Yes, says the *Vanamala*, but ‘only in a secondary sense and not in a primary sense’. Let us elaborate. The attribute of all-pervasiveness, which is also a meaning of the word ‘Brahman’, belongs only to non-dual Brahman and cannot be considered a distinct class. However, according to the *Vanamala* an ‘imagined all-pervasiveness exists in time, space, undifferentiated nature, and so on’. Thus, the word *satya* is held to act as a differentiator among the class of all-pervasive entities—both imagined and absolute. It functions by separating the association of all-pervasiveness with empirical, mutable entities like the undifferentiated, and so on. The word *satya* refers only to the unchanging absolute Brahman. But this word does not differentiate Brahman from entities belonging to a different class and therefore the *Vanamala* says that the word *satya* ‘only partially functions as a differentiator’. Hence, we have to look for a better model.

**The space model** • The *Vanamala* says that the property of ‘giving room’ for other things to exist characterises space or *akasha*. Here the phrase ‘giving room’ primarily functions as a defining attribute and only secondarily as a differentiator. The adjective ‘giving room’ points out an unique attribute of space vis-à-vis other entities and thus defines it. In addition, it also performs differentiation. The force of the definition dissociates space from entities belonging to the same class like earth, water, fire, air, mind, and also from entities belonging to other classes like qualities, action, genus. The function of the phrase ‘giving room’ as a differentiator is subordinate to its function as a defining attribute.

The space model is more applicable in the

context of the sentence '*Satyam jnanam anantam brahma*'. The word *satya* refers to a reality unsublatable in the past, present, or future. This word thus defines Brahman not directly through the power of denotation, *vachya-shakti*, but through implication, *lakshana*. The force of the definition separates the mind's association with all mutable entities, irrespective of whether they are all-pervasive, not all-pervasive, empirical, or illusory. At the end of such separation, the mind itself dissolves and one becomes established in the absolute immutable Brahman, the implied meaning of *satya*. According to the *Vanamala*, the implied meaning of this sentence is not the relation between the meanings of *satya* and *brahma*, but 'an undivided homogenous unitary entity'.

Acharya Shankara posits an objection to the above position that Brahman is not something previously known and also it cannot be verified by any other means of knowledge based on perception. Thus, there is no guarantee that the process of refutation of change or mental states of knowing, based on the senses conveyed by *satya* and *jnana* as adjectives of Brahman, will yield anything meaningful. There is a danger of 'changelessness' and 'pure knowing' being reduced to just empty concepts. Acharya Shankara himself answers this by saying that the words themselves, except *ananta*, do not function as differentiators but through the power of implication, *lakshana-shakti*, they give a positive meaning to Brahman. The *Vanamala* adds here: 'We cannot say that the denotative power of these words is totally dysfunctional with reference to Brahman. Because we can infer, on the basis of scriptures, that this changing universe, empirically experienced, must have a real substratum, just as an illusory snake that is perceived must have a rope as its substratum.'

An additional aspect is to be noted here. While in the space model, the phrase 'giving room' refers to the unique attribute of space, the word *satya* on

the other hand, refers to the very essential nature of Brahman. In the sentence in question, the words *satya* and *jnana* function both as the defining attribute and the thing that is being defined. Insofar as *satya* starts the process of negation called *neti-neti*, within us, this word functions as the defining attribute. Again, at the culmination of this process of negation, when the mind and its associations dissolve into the immutable substratum of all change, it becomes the defined.

Here, we need to discuss the verbal intent, *shabdi bhavana*, involved in the word *satya*? Does this word directly intend to convey the function of differentiation? The answer is no. The intention involved in the word is to directly convey a unitary meaning, *svarupa-samarpaṇatvam*, of an unchanging or self-luminous reality. The process of negation is the intent, *arthi bhavana*, that arises upon our understanding the meaning of the verbal intent, *shabdi bhavana*.

To sum:

1. The words *satya* and *jnana* primarily define Brahman through implication of its essential nature of being an immutable, intelligent principle.
2. These words also act as differentiators. This role is subordinate to their function as defining attributes. These words differentiate Brahman from the ideas of change or modes of knowing.
3. The intent of these words is to convey a unitary meaning. The intent to negate or start the process of *neti-neti* is induced in the spiritual aspirant when one comprehends the meaning of the verbal intent of these words.

Now, let us analyse the individual meanings of these words.

### ***From the Verbal Meaning of Satya to its Implied Meaning***

**The implied meaning of *satya*** • Acharya Shankara says: 'A thing is said to be *satya*, true,

when it does not change its known nature.' He further says:

Since Brahman is free from the attributes of class and the like that are necessary for a verbal description, the word *jnana*—which refers to the attributes of the intellect—indicates Brahman but does not denote it. Similarly, Brahman is not denoted even by the word *satya*, since Brahman is, by its nature, devoid of all distinctions. The word *satya*, which generally refers to external reality, can refer to Brahman in expressions like 'Brahman is truth', but cannot denote Brahman.

Acharya Shankara explains the meaning of the word *satya* on the basis of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* statement, 'All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Earth as such is the reality.'<sup>6</sup> The changing forms of clay have speech alone as their support. They are only names and are therefore unreal. The cause, clay, divested of names and forms alone is the reality. Similarly, all forms of experience too, having speech alone as their basis, are merely names and therefore unreal. *Sat*, pure existence as the unsublatable supreme cause alone is the reality.

**The verbal meaning of *satya*** • What is this external reality that is denoted by the word *satya* that Acharya Shankara is speaking of? Anandagiri's explanation to this is as follows: Only the empirical reality of an object can be indicated by verbal expression. And this empirical reality is nothing but an attribute which, while characterising an object, exhibits the contrary properties of being both inclusive and exclusive at the same time. To elaborate, the empirical reality of a cow is nothing but its being characterised by cow-ness which, seems to persist in all cows and is at the same time excluded from all non-cows. These changeful processes of inclusion of cow-ness and its exclusion, being mutually dependent, contradict

each other and therefore the reality of the object characterised by these processes cannot be unchanging and absolute.

Anandagiri explains further: 'Brahman—in which these inclusive-exclusive processes (of characterising external reality) are imagined—is neither inclusive nor exclusive and is the implied meaning of the word *satya*'.

#### **The refinement of the verbal meaning of *satya***

- Acharya Shankara explains the principle of this refinement and applies it to the word : 'The words *satya* and the like, occurring in mutual proximity, and restricting and being restricted in turns by each other, distinguish Brahman from other objects denoted by the words, truth and the like, and thus become fit for defining Brahman too.'

Explaining this *Vanamala* says that 'these words (mutually working on each other) act as separators, extracting the very essence that is (unchanging) existence-(pure) knowledge-non-duality from their respective verbal senses and establishes this essence as the essential nature of Brahman'.

The adjoining words *jnana* and *ananta* remove, refine, or filter out the verbal meaning of the word *satya*, establishing the implied meaning of the word *satya* as Brahman. For instance, doubts may persist that the supreme cause, *sat*, like its effects, is insentient and that it depends on some other sentient agency to bring about changes. For example, clay, an inert material cause, depends on a sentient potter, who is different from clay, to produce pots.

The word *jnana*, knowledge, removes both these doubts by ruling out an insentient supreme cause and emphasises the total dissociation of *sat* from all kinds of agencies. According to *Vanamala*, the word *jnana* helps in refining the meaning of *satya*, establishing the supreme cause and the substratum of all imagined effects,

*sat*, to be synonymous with pure consciousness. Finally, the word *ananta*, infinite, rules out any limitation of *sat* by emphasising that its manifestations do not exist apart from it. Since these manifestations themselves are essentially *sat* itself, *sat* is infinite.

### **From the Verbal Meaning of *Jnana* to its Implied Meaning**

**The implied meaning of *jnana*** • *Jnana* implies pure knowing. It is the very essence of the knower and is not dependent on the accessories of knowledge—the threefold modes of the knower, the process of knowing, and the knowable. And so, *jnana* is unchanging and eternal. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: ‘For the knower’s function of knowing can never be lost, because it is immortal, but there is not that second thing.’<sup>7</sup> Quoting this sentence, Acharya Shankara concludes: ‘Just because Brahman’s nature of being the knower is inseparable and because there is no dependence on other accessories like the sense-organs, Brahman, though intrinsically identical with knowledge, is well known to be eternal.’

**The verbal meaning of *jnana*** • We will analyse the verbal meaning of *jnana* in two stages:

1. *Vritti-jnana* or *jnana-abhasa*: When the pure consciousness of the Atman becomes identified with the limiting adjuncts through cognitions of I-consciousness, the processes of knowing and the objects of knowledge become the verbal meaning of the word *jnana*. This is *vritti-jnana*.

Let us elaborate. The notions of ‘I know’, ‘I hear’, ‘I see’, and so on, are nothing but different cognitions of I-consciousness. *Vanamala* says: ‘Here, *vritti* is the identification of I-consciousness with the illuminer and the illumined through the agency of self.’ Whether nascent or fully-formed, these cognitions arise

and manifest themselves being fully pervaded by pure consciousness.

According to *Vanamala*: ‘Since *vrittis* are inert, they cannot identify with pure consciousness and cannot illumine sense-objects, and therefore it is held that they are only semblances of *jnana*.’ Further *Vanamala* says that ‘those who do not properly understand the meaning of the scriptures mistakenly think the semblances of *jnana* to be the attributes of Atman’.

2. *Jnana*, the all-knowing and all-witnessing aspect of Brahman: A living or non-living object fails to become the object of the individual soul’s direct perception due to separation in space because of the object being too subtle, obstructed, or remote. The individual soul may fail to perceive the object also due to separation in time because of the events occurring in the past or the future. Time and space act as separators only when the individual soul is ignorant of its true nature. In reality, time and space do not have any existence apart from Brahman; they are just empty concepts. According to *Vanamala*, the ‘consciousness is mistaken for space and Ishvara and the like are mistaken for time’.

Further, *Vanamala* says that the only role of time and space is to act as ‘the substratum of all imagination’. According to Acharya Shankara, ‘all that exists is not different from Brahman in time or space because Brahman is the cause of time, space, and the like’. Thus any object, however much it appears to be separated in time or space, actually originates from the subtlest of all objects, the substratum of all imaginations, Brahman, and is thus directly witnessed by Brahman. Brahman is called by *Vanamala* to be ‘all-knowing by virtue of its being the witness of all’.

This omniscience cannot be the implied sense of the word *jnana*, but only its denotative sense because as Acharya Shankara says elsewhere

that Brahman ‘has maya as its limiting adjunct, is the cause of the universe, is described as all-knowing, and so on.’<sup>8</sup> Maya projects the entire gross and subtle universe of names and forms on Brahman for the enjoyment of the individual souls in accordance with their karma. Thus, maya becomes instrumental for the immanence of Brahman in creation. This is because Brahman is the unchanging witness and the animating factor of maya and its creation, the universe.

In his commentary on the later portion of the second chapter of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Acharya Shankara says that ‘Brahman is independent. ... defects as desires cannot impel Brahman to action just as they do others by subjecting them to their influence.’ To the question whether Brahman has any desires, Acharya Shankara replies that the desires of Brahman ‘are by nature truth and knowledge, and they are pure by virtue of their identity with Brahman. Brahman is not impelled to action by them. But Brahman ordains them in accordance with the results of actions of the creatures.’<sup>9</sup> Maya cannot obstruct the transcendent self-illuminated awareness of Brahman. Maya depends entirely on Brahman for its existence and cannot exist apart from it, whereas Brahman does not depend on maya either for its existence or illumination because it is ever unchanging and self-illuminated.

**The refinement of the verbal meaning of *jnana***

- Acharya Shankara says: ‘The consciousness of Brahman is inherent in Brahman and cannot be separated from it, just as the light of the sun cannot be separated from sun or the heat of fire cannot be separated from fire.’ This consciousness is the implied meaning of the word *jnana*. Thus, this principle of consciousness is the very essential nature of the Self because the true Self of any being is Brahman.

In the verbal meaning of *jnana*, this

consciousness appears to be associated with the triad of the knower, the process of knowing, and the objective knowledge. Thus, the process of refining the verbal meaning of *jnana* involves the separation of the principle of pure consciousness from the above-mentioned triad, and establishing the implied meaning of *jnana* as Brahman.

Again, the adjoining adjectives *satya* and *ananta* refines the meaning of *jnana*. The association of the knower with the accessories of knowledge implies that the knower-self is always changing with the changing modes of knowing and the objects of knowledge. Thus, the word *satya*, by ruling out the possibility of any change in pure consciousness, helps in emphasising *jnana*’s independence from the above-mentioned triad and establishes the principle of consciousness as being synonymous with *sat*, the immutable and unsublatable Reality. The knower is always limited by the processes and objects of knowledge. The word *ananta* eliminates the sense of limitation in pure consciousness by ruling out the possibility of any duality.

It was told earlier that the words *satya* and *jnana* operate as differentiators, subordinate to their role as defining attributes. The adjective *ananta*, in contrast, functions primarily as a differentiator and does not define Brahman through implication. The word *ananta* does not contribute any meaning of its own to Brahman. Acharya Shankara says that ‘the word *ananta* becomes an adjective by way of negating finitude, whereas the words *satya* and *jnana* become adjectives even while imparting their own meanings to Brahman’.

Before starting a discussion on the word *ananta*, it would be relevant to see how Acharya Shankara comments on this word. He postpones the explanation of the word *ananta* and first

analyses the words *satya* and *jnana*. According to *Vanamala*, Acharya Shankara explains the infinitude of Brahman ‘on the basis of the Upanishadic statement, “From this Self, space was produced”<sup>10</sup>. *Vanamala* argues that Acharya Shankara does so to prove that ‘out of the three kinds of infinitude—from the standpoints of space, time, and objects—the meaning of this Upanishadic statement is infinitude from the standpoint of objects’. Acharya Shankara argues that since Brahman is not limited by other objects, because the effect in the form of creation does not exist apart from the cause.

### **The Infinitude of Sat**

While establishing the infinitude of *sat*, Acharya Shankara refers to this sentence from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: ‘All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Earth as such is the reality.’<sup>11</sup> To understand infinitude, we should first understand limitation. There are three kinds of limitations: spatial, temporal, and those brought about by the presence of other objects.

**Denial of spatial limitations in *sat*** • Space existing everywhere is infinite. Brahman, being the cause of space, must also be spatially infinite.

**Denial of temporal limitations in *sat*** • Space, being an effect of Brahman, is time-bound. Brahman, being the supreme cause and not an effect, is not limited by time. Brahman is also the cause of time. Brahman is the basis of all imagination, both in the form of subjective notions in the subtle plane of existence and the more tangible objects of perception in the gross plane of existence. Space provides the fundamental material for all these imaginations of Brahman, while time arranges this material in the form of events. But ultimately, space also is an effect because it is created and destroyed.

**Denial of objective limitations in *sat*** • How

do we conclude that the relative existence of objects limit each other? Because of the flitting of our awareness from one object to another. Let us try to understand this based on Acharya Shankara’s explanation. Suppose, our perception shifts from a cow to a horse. Then the notion of the horse limits the notion of the cow. To generalise, suppose we are perceiving two objects one after another. At first, we are aware that the first object is separate from the second object. Now, to properly perceive the second object, we have to withdraw the idea of the difference between the first and the second object.

But, when Brahman—in the form of the supreme cause, *sat*—is realised, the notion that the effect can exist separate from the supreme cause is once for all destroyed, because the effect has no independent existence apart from the cause. Thus, the notion of the effect’s separation is replaced by the awareness of its non-separateness from the cause, which cannot be countered and therefore permeates every succeeding perception and thus, *sat*, the object of that awareness, must be infinite.

To summarise the discussion on the infinitude of *sat*:

1. Brahman as *sat*, the cause of infinite space, is spatially infinite.
2. The supreme cause, *sat*, unlike space, never becomes an effect and is therefore not bound by time.
3. Finally, because no effect can exist separate from the supreme cause, *sat*, it also cannot be limited by any other object.

### **The Infinitude of Consciousness**

While proving the infinitude of *jnana*, Acharya Shankara quotes this sentence from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: ‘The infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, and does not know anything

else. Hence, the finite is that where one sees something else, hears something else, and knows something else' (7.24.1).

The presence of a knower always implies that the knower is limited by the modes and objects of knowledge. Thus, for the principle of consciousness to be infinite, it should be dissociated from the accessories of knowledge in the form of the knower, object of knowledge, instruments of knowledge, receptors, locations of knowing, and so on.

After quoting the above-mentioned sentence from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, Acharya Shankara posits the following objection to the Advaita position: 'From the denial of particulars in the above statement, "One does not know anything else", it follows that one knows the Self.' It is the standpoint of Kumarila Bhatta that the Atman has two aspects, the sentient and the insentient. By resorting to its sentient aspect, the Atman becomes the knower and by virtue of its insentient aspect the Atman becomes the object of knowledge. Thus, the objection is that knower-ship can certainly coexist with infinitude. Acharya Shankara sets aside this objection in this manner:

1. Such a supposition goes against the Shrutis that establish the Atman to be partless, which cannot be divided into the knower and the known.

2. It is our daily experience that the knower and the known are always different and opposed to each other. So, the statement of their being same is not logical.

3. If the Self is considered the object of the daily experience of knowing, then the Shrutis lose their place as the primary means of knowing the Self.

Thus, it is established that for the pure consciousness to be infinite, it should be free from the subject-object duality. 

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# Tat Tvam Asi: You Are That

**Swami Vedapurushananda**

**R**am: Hey Shyam! How are you? I haven't seen you for a long time.

Shyam: I am fine. But the happenings in our country depresses me of late.

R: Do you mean the unending antics of our politicians?

S: No. That's always there. But the mindless killings of innocent civilians by terror attacks, that too in the name of religion, is nauseating. It creates an aversion in my mind towards religion. Is there not a religion that is universal and tolerant, that can unite all these warring religions in love and peace?

R: No Shyam, don't blame religions for these heinous crimes. They are not at fault. It is we humans who use religion for our selfish ends. For that matter, no religion asks its followers to kill innocent people. As to your second query, there is a philosophy that has the potential to become a universal religion. It is called Vedanta, Advaita Vedanta. Have you heard about it?

S: Vedanta? I know a company by that name.

R (laughing): Oh no! I don't mean that. Vedanta is the comprehensive philosophy based on the Vedas, the oldest book of humanity.

S: Vedas! The name sounds exotic. Can you tell me something about it?

R: Vedas are the bedrock of Indian culture and civilisation. By Vedas, we primarily mean the eternal spiritual laws that were discovered by ancient rishis in their meditations. Since these laws were not the product of any person, they are called *apaurusheya* and as they were transmitted orally, they are also called 'Shruti'.

They were divided into four by Vyasa. They are Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda. The Rig Veda mainly contains verses in metrical form. The text of the Yajur Veda is in prose. The Sama Veda has songs set to music. All the three forms of metre, prose, and song are found in the Atharva Veda.

Each Veda is broadly divided into three parts:

- Samhitas: They contain prayers to different deities.
- Brahmanas: They deal with rituals to attain desired results.
- Aranyakas: They deal with knowledge and contemplation.

Upanishads are texts containing knowledge leading to the realisation of one's true nature. These texts are found in any of the three parts mentioned earlier, but mostly in the Aranyakas.

S: Interesting! What are these Upanishads? I am hearing about them for the first time.

R: Upanishads primarily stand for the sacred and secret knowledge that is capable of removing our primordial ignorance, leading to liberation. Etymologically the word may also mean the knowledge that is gained by sitting at the feet of the guru. Secondarily it denotes the book. Its other name is Vedanta for it appears at the end, *-anta*, of the Vedas. There are hundreds of Upanishads, of which eleven Upanishads commented by Acharya Shankara are considered important.

S: What is the place of Upanishads in Hinduism?

R: They occupy a very high place. They are

one of the foundational texts of Hinduism. In fact, the Sanatana Dharma is based on the secure foundation of three *prasthanas* or paths. They are:

- Shruti *prasthana*: The Upanishads.
- Smriti *prasthana*: The Bhagavadgita.
- Nyaya *prasthana*: The *Brahma Sutra*.

S: Tell me more about the Upanishads. What do they contain?

R: You see Shyam, Upanishads are a veritable mine-house of religious and philosophical ideas. They have been systematised and interpreted to give out a single coherent teaching by several acharyas according to their philosophical leanings. Thus, we have three main philosophical schools of Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Advaita. They all believe in:

- Vedas and in its characteristic features that are already enumerated.
- Cyclical nature of creation, that is, the universe was not created out of nothing but it is only a projection with periodic evolution and involution.
- That there is a divine core within all of us that is eternal.

However, they differ in the relationship of the individual soul with God, on the nature of the world, concept of liberation, and in few other minor matters.

S: Well Ram! You mentioned about Advaita Vedanta. Where does it fit in all this?

R: Advaita is the fairest flower in the garden of Indian philosophical thought. A complete system of great intellectual daring and logical acumen, Advaita is the pinnacle of the spiritual thought attained anywhere in the world. According to Swami Vivekananda, it is the religion for the future. If a person wants to be rational and religious at the same time, Advaita is the religion. A comprehensive system that can harmonise all the warring sects and religions—it is the final word in religion.

S: Your description of Advaita is interesting and at the same time quite intimidating. I fear I don't have it in me to understand its teachings.

R: Don't worry. I will tell you the essence of Advaita in simple words. Listen.

Acharya Shankara presented Advaita in a nutshell in the following shloka: '*Brahma satyam jagat mithya, jivo brahmaiva na aparah*; Brahman is real, this universe is unreal, and the individual soul is nothing other than Brahman.'<sup>1</sup>

It has three propositions:

1. Brahman alone is real.
2. The world is unreal.
3. *Jiva*, the individual soul, is none other than Brahman, the universal Self.

We shall study them in detail now.

'Brahman is Real': It means that Brahman is the only Reality. But what is this Brahman? Advaita defines Brahman both positively and negatively.

Positively it says:

- Brahman is absolute Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss.
- It is undifferentiated Consciousness.
- Brahman is that which is known directly and intimately and through which everything is known.

Negatively, Advaita defines Brahman as that which remains after negating everything else as 'not this, not this'. Brahman is not a concept to be defined. It is *nirguna*, devoid of all qualities; *nirvikara*, without any modifications; *nishkriya*, free from all actions; *nirvishesha*, which cannot be characterised, and so on.

S: I have a question, Ram. What is the criterion for Reality? On what basis do you claim that Brahman is Real and the world is unreal?

R: Good that you asked this question. The basic axiom in Advaita is: that which is eternal and unchanging at all times is Real and that which changes and perishes is unreal. This

phenomenal world of name and form is always changing, hence it is unreal, even though it is experienced. It disappears on the rise of true knowledge. We can also say that the world is apparently real and Brahman which is the substratum is Real because it always remains the same.

S: Two questions crop up in my mind. Shall I ask them?

R: Feel free to ask questions, Shyam. Advaita encourages its listeners to analyse, think, debate, and question. It does not thrust any dogmas on its adherents, to be believed blindly.

S: Wow! That's refreshing to hear. Okay. Now tell me how can the unreal world and the real Brahman coexist? And if Brahman is the only Reality, wherefrom did this world come up?

R: Yes. That's a key point to understand in Advaita: How did the One become the many?

They say that we don't experience both the One and the many at the same time and so the question of the relationship between them does not arise. When we 'see' the One, the many does not exist and when we deal with the many, the One is not perceived. The world is related to Brahman in the same way as the wave is related to the ocean.

Also, a relation can be only between two distinct items. But Brahman is not distinct from the world. It is Brahman alone, which appears as this universe and all the things in it. It is just like the relation between the gold and the ornaments made out of it. Ornaments differ in their name, form, and use, but they are all made of gold alone. Same is the case here. The only difference is that while the transformation of gold into ornaments is real, the transformation of Brahman into the world is only apparent, caused by maya.

S: What is this maya?

R: The principle assumed to account for the appearance of Brahman as the world is called maya. In the twilight, we mistake a rope for a

snake and are frightened. This superimposition of a non-existent snake on a rope is due to our ignorance. When the truth is known, the snake vanishes. But there is no change in the nature of the rope at any time. Similarly, Advaita claims that the world is the illusory projection on Brahman caused by maya and it vanishes when this maya is destroyed by true knowledge.

Maya is also defined as the power of Brahman. Brahman associated with maya is called *ishvara*.

S: I hope you will enlighten me more on *ishvara*.

R: The supreme Brahman with attributes is called *ishvara*. It is omniscient, omnipotent, possessor of all good qualities to the fullest measure, bestower of the fruits of our actions, and the creator, preserver, and destroyer of this universe. *Ishvara* is the controller of maya. Personal gods are various aspects of this *ishvara*, who also incarnates in human form as Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Christ, Buddha, and so on from time to time. In fact, *ishvara*, the universe, and the individual souls or *jivas* are apparent manifestations of the *nirguna* Brahman caused by maya. They are all co-existent.

S: Just now, you mentioned about the *jivas*. Tell me, how are these *jivas* related to Brahman?

R: Yes. Now we come to the climax of our discussion. I would like to recall what I stated earlier: '*Jivo brahmaiva na aparah*'. We are not a part, modification, product of, or different from Brahman but we are Brahman. The sentence, '*Tat tvam asi*; you are that,'<sup>2</sup> is a famous dictum of Advaita.

S: Hey Ram! What happened to you? Till now you were talking reasonably, suddenly what happened? You are babbling something.

R: No, Shyam. Vedanta gives that shock to shake us from our stupor. Jiva is the reflection of pure Consciousness on the inner instrument,

*antahkarana*. It is like the reflection of the sun in water kept in different pots. Just as one sun appears to be many, one Brahman appears to have become innumerable souls. This is the result of ignorance. When all the pots are broken, the many reflected suns cease to exist. In the same way, the *jiva* maintains its individuality due to ignorance, *avidya*, and realises its true nature as '*Aham Brahmasmi*; I am Brahman'<sup>3</sup> on the destruction of ignorance by knowledge. The true nature of every *jiva* is eternal, ever pure, ever free Self, Atman. It is neither born nor does it die.

S: Wonderful to hear that my real nature is supreme Brahman. But still it is very difficult to believe.

R: See, it is not that Brahman is totally unknown to us in our present condition. It is the One undifferentiated consciousness that appears as the individual consciousness in all and all sensory enjoyments are a pale echo of that infinite bliss. Realised souls like Sri Ramakrishna saw God in everything.

Let me tell you a story narrated by Swamiji. It will bring some clarity. Once upon a time there was a pregnant lioness in a forest. One day in the course of hunting a flock of sheep, she gave birth to a lion cub and died of exertion. The sheep took the cub along with them and took care of him. He grew up like any other sheep, eating grass, bleating, and was mortally afraid of even a fox, what to speak of a lion. In the course of time, he grew up into a strong lion. But in thought and action, he always considered himself to be a weak sheep. One day a big lion started chasing this herd of sheep. He was astonished to see a young lion running helter-skelter amidst the sheep. He caught hold of the young lion and asked what the matter was.

The young sheep-lion trembled in fear and pleaded to spare his life. The older lion said:

'You are a lion. Stop bleating like a sheep.' But the younger one refused to accept this. Amused with his continuous whining to spare his life, the big lion took his ward to a river and asked to see his reflection in the water. The sheep-lion saw his reflected form in the water and was confused. Now a piece of raw flesh was thrust into his mouth. All his protests were in vain. Then the older lion began to roar and asked him to do the same. The sheep-lion tried his voice and was soon roaring as grandly as the other. And he was a sheep no longer.

So, Swamiji said: 'Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'<sup>4</sup>

S: Now I am convinced. Is there any way of realising this truth?

R: Yes, there is. First thing you should realise is that you are already 'That'. You should be firmly convinced of this truth. Realisation is not a state to be attained or a thing to be produced. Just like scum covers water, ignorance has covered our true nature. Upon the dawn of knowledge, ignorance vanishes just as darkness vanishes in the presence of light and our true nature shines forth.

The steps for attaining Self-realisation according to Vedanta are:

1. Being endowed with the four qualifications called *sadhana-chatushtaya*, the quartet of spiritual disciplines. They are: *viveka*, the discernment between the real and unreal; *vairagya*, dispassion for the unreal; *shamadi-shatka sampattih*, the acquisition of the six treasures—*shama*, control of the mind; *dama*, control of the sense-organs; *uparati*, withdrawal of the mind from the sense-objects; *titiksha*, forbearance; *shraddha*, faith in scriptures and guru, and sincerity of purpose;

*samadhana*, concentration of the mind; and finally an intense desire for liberation, *mumukshutva*.

2. Learning the Vedantic truths from a learned and realised teacher.

3. Knowing the truth for oneself by the three-fold practice of *shravana*, hearing with assimilation; *manana*, reflection; and *nididhyasana*, contemplation.

S: Now, tell me what are the practical implications of these Vedantic teachings to the individual and society?

R: This is a good question, Shyam. I shall answer it briefly.

- The fundamental principles forming the basis of the Hindu culture like Oneness and interconnectedness of all existence, unity in diversity, acceptance of all religions and cults are based on Vedanta.
- It is the only philosophy whose doctrines like the theory of evolution, the unity of energy and matter, the cyclical nature of creation, and so on are validated by modern science. Like science, it is rational, impersonal, universal, based on experience, and capable of replication by anyone. Hence, it is ideally placed to be the religion of the future.
- The ideal of service is based on the Advaitic dictum of ‘*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*; everything is indeed Brahman.<sup>5</sup> Reiterating this idea, Swamiji said: ‘God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that. “Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed”<sup>6</sup>
- At the individual level, it makes people pure, strong, confident, fearless, independent, and grants freedom from misery forever.

Hence, Swamiji said: ‘Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping



soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity’ (3.193).

Shyam: Thank you Ram for enlightening me on this vital subject.

Ram: It is alright. It is a pleasure speaking on Vedanta. Bye.



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# YOUNG EYES

## *Fighting Alcoholism*

**W**E CHILDREN are the worst victims of alcoholism. Our very lives get shattered if either of our parents is an alcoholic. We are scarred for lives. Most children with alcoholic parents are abused, mostly through violence. Such children lose a considerable part or the whole of their childhoods. All that remains of that supposedly glorious period is a foggy memory of a deep-seated trauma. What remains is a fear of closeness, a fear of losing, and a fear of getting hurt. It is also not uncommon to see the children of alcoholic parents turn alcoholics themselves. The sad part is that while many people talk about alcoholism and start many projects to curb it, very few if at all, seek the opinion of us children. That is why we are sharing here some of our thoughts on alcoholism.

Parents are the closest people to children, at least, that is how it should be. We are taken care of by the parents, which needs their complete attention and wisdom. They have to be alert always, particularly when they are taking care of small children or babies. Even a small slip on the part of the parents can lead to a huge accident. Even in the case of older children, if the parent is not available all the time for the child, it might lead to many complications, including that of child safety. It is quite important for us that our parents are available to attend to our difficulties and to just listen to us and spend time with us.

Any kind of instability on the part of the parents could make them unavailable to the child and if they are mentally or emotionally not

available to the child, the child is traumatised and cannot bear it. We children need the love and affection of our parents more than anything else in life. When a parent is intoxicated, the parent is not in control of oneself and unable to show love or affection properly. For example, if a child is ill, a drunk parent cannot even understand that. What to speak of the child's needs regarding lessons in manners and grooming! The child gets almost no such training from a parent, who remains drunk most of the time.

One of the biggest challenges we children face with an alcoholic parent is that of social embarrassment and insult. Our friends start making fun of us because of our alcoholic parent. No friend wants to come to our house. We miss out on sleepovers and study sessions. Some friends or their parents start pitying us. They always try to offer company and care, mostly with good intentions, but sometimes just as one would offer food to a hungry beggar, out of pity. When such affection is shown to us because of pity, we feel as though we have no one to call our own. This feels bad because we do have parents, but all this happens as one of our parents is an alcoholic.

The children of an alcoholic parent cannot go on outings with the parent because such a parent would create a scene almost every time the family goes out of the house. Even one such incident is sufficient to destroy a child's mind, but it happens over and again. The child misses out on the better aspects of childhood. The child cannot go out, mix with others, visit places, and is completely ostracised by other children and

their parents. Apart from the shock and trauma of having to deal with an alcoholic parent, the child also has to deal with the additional trauma of being isolated from their community, their friends, and soon develops social anxiety.

A child of an alcoholic parent is generally confused about how to handle different emotions and grows with wrong examples of emotional outbursts, quarrels, and abuse. It becomes quite difficult for such a child to be non-aggressive in behaviour as an adult. It is quite common for such children to grow up into adults having temper problems and rash behaviour. There is a very high probability of a child of an alcoholic parent turning into an alcoholic oneself.

A child having an alcoholic as a parent does not know what is normal in relationships, families, and general behaviour and has difficulties in choosing the right role models. Since there is much lying in families having alcoholic parents, a child of such a family has problems trusting people and is constantly afraid of bad behaviour or anger of people. Such children try to avoid all confrontations and struggles and lack self-confidence or self-esteem. Many times a child blames oneself for the drinking problem of the parent, honestly believing that some behaviour of the child has caused the parent to become an alcoholic.

An alcoholic parent squanders much money on drinking and there is sometimes no money left for the basic needs of the family and children. In an age of increasing needs for bringing up children, in a family with an alcoholic parent, it becomes quite difficult to provide proper healthcare and education to the children.

Children of alcoholic parents become easy targets of people who abuse children, as these children seek attention, care, or love from outside their families because they do not get proper attention or love in their own families. Children



of alcoholic parents also tend to become ‘parents’ of their actual parents because they have to manage situations from a very early age, making them arrive at an understanding of life that might not be well-balanced.

To avoid problems in later life of a child of an alcoholic parent, the first thing that needs to be done is that such a child should be made to stay away from any kind of alcohol, even that consumed on social occasions. It is wise to get some therapy for the child of an alcoholic so that the child can manage the parent’s alcoholism. However, while the parent should be given proper care, therapy, and support for getting out of alcohol abuse, all the needs of the children of such a parent should be attended to and it should be ensured that they get as normal a childhood as possible. The parent can strive to become a good parent and this striving itself could prove to be a great incentive for getting out of alcoholism.

Many training and therapy groups help both the alcoholic parent and their children, and other family members including spouses to cope with the problem of alcoholism. One should feel free to seek the support of such groups and increase the net of friends with similar families or parents so that one gets more and more people who can understand and empathise with the problems of a family with an alcoholic parent.



# BALABODHA

**Ancient Wisdom Made Easy**

## Guru

THE WORD ‘guru’ is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word ‘guru’ is a teacher or master. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word ‘guru’ is derived by adding the suffix *unam* to the word *gri*, which means to praise, to sound, speak, or sing about. The word ‘guru’ is of the masculine gender and means heavy, weighty, great, large, long in length, long in duration, violent, vehement, intense, extended, eminent, difficult, hard, arduous, food that is heavy in the stomach, food that is hard to digest, haughty speech, proud speech, irresistible, unassailable, mighty, powerful, grievous, high in degree, important, momentous, serious, much, excessive, best, excellent, venerable, respectable, dear, beloved, valuable, highly prized, accented long as a foot or vowel, the long vowel, a sound equal to two simple sounds or matras, a vowel long by nature or position, a spiritual parent, a person from whom one receives the initiatory mantra or prayer, one who conducts the ceremonies necessary at various phases of youth and infancy, a person who bestows one with the sacred thread, religious preceptor, one who explains the law and religion to the student, a name of Brihaspati or the teacher

of the gods or devas, a father or any venerable male relative, forefather, ancestor, father-in-law, any venerable or respectable person, an elderly person or relative, a lord, head, superintendent, ruler, chief, the author of a mantra, the head of the castes or orders, the planet Jupiter, the propounder of a new doctrine, the lunar asterism called *pushya*, another name of Dronacharya who was the teacher of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, another name of Prabhakara who was the propounder of a school of Mimamsa, the supreme spirit, *Mucuna pruriens* or velvet bean, name of a son of Samkriti, a honorific title of a teacher, pregnant, a pregnant woman, the wife of a teacher, and a son of Bhautya Manu.

Faith in the words of the guru has been emphasised as one of the basic prerequisites for a spiritual aspirant. Every student has to give a fee or *guru-dakshina* to the guru. According to some texts, the word ‘guru’ is made up of two parts, *gu*, darkness and *ru*, the light that dispels it. Thus, the meaning of the word ‘guru’ is held to be the dispeller of darkness.

In the Indian tradition, the guru is accorded a great place. The order of reverence traditionally accepted is that first, the mother has to be revered, then the father, then the guru, and it is only after these three that God has to be revered. Disobeying, duping, or otherwise disrespecting the guru has been severely looked down upon and the atonement sometimes is as harsh as giving up one’s life. Sometimes, a guru could also make the teaching ineffective if the disciple is found to be dishonest.



# TRADITIONAL TALES

## **Dharmadatta's Charity**

**T**HIS IS A STORY about a previous lifetime of Rani Kaikeyi of the Ramayana fame. In the days of the old, at the base of the mountain Sahyachala was the town Karavipura. There lived the great brahmana Dharmadatta. Once, as was his habit, he fasted on the Ekadashi day in the Kartik month of the Hindu calendar. He woke up in the last hours of that night, prayed to God, collected the materials necessary for God's worship at that hour, and proceeded towards the temple. Halfway through, he saw a demoness making terrible sounds and running towards him. Poor man! Dharmadatta's hungry and exhausted body trembled in fear. His lips were uttering God's name. Fearing that the demoness would pounce upon him, he threw at her the plate carrying the materials of worship.

When the worship materials like tulsi leaves and water collected by the great devotee Dharmadatta—who regularly fasted on Ekadashi days—fell on the demoness, all the effects of her previous actions or all her karma were destroyed. She remembered her previous lifetimes. At once, she prostrated at Dharmadatta's feet and prayed: 'Sir! I am wandering and suffering thus as a demoness because of my past actions. Please show me the way to regain a good state of life.' Dharmadatta felt compassionate towards her and asked her to tell about her previous lifetime. The demoness told her entire story as follows.

Long ago, there lived a brahmana named Bhikshu in the city of Saurashtra. His wife, named Kalaka—which means troublemaker—was just like her name and her traits and actions

were quite terrible. Even by mistake, she never spoke lovingly to her husband and never even thought about her husband's welfare or happiness. Daily, she used to herself eat all the good things she cooked and left for her husband only the remains or things that she disliked. In short, she did the exact opposite of whatever her husband told. Eventually, this became her nature.

Learning of Bhikshu's plight, a friend suggested a plan. Bhikshu had to tell his wife the exact opposite of whatever he wanted. Bhikshu followed the plan and whatever he told Kalaka not to do, she did them at once. One day, Bhikshu planned a feast for his bosom friend and told his wife: 'See Kalaka! My friend is a bad man. We should not invite him to a feast, even by mistake.' Kalka instantly replied: 'No, no. There is none greater than your friend in this world. I will give him a feast today.' She did as she said. Thus, Bhikshu got his work done through Kalaka by telling her the exact opposite of whatever he wanted.

Then came his father's death anniversary when special rites had to be performed. Bhikshu told his wife: 'Listen, I will not perform any special rites for my father's death anniversary.' This angered Kalaka. She said: 'What bad times have befallen you? What kind of a son are you who cannot perform these rites? Why is your brain getting deranged thus? Have you considered what evil would come upon you if you do not perform these rites? I am inviting a brahmana for the rites right away. You have to perform these rites.' Kalaka immediately left in search of a brahmana.

Secretly enjoying all this, Bhikshu told Kalaka: 'You may invite one priest. Do not spend unnecessarily.' At once, Kalaka screamed in rage: 'What do you know? Keep your mouth shut.' She invited eighteen brahmanas as guests. On the day of the death anniversary, Bhikshu told Kalaka: 'Do not cook anything great. No need to cook various dishes. It is a waste of money.' Kalaka immediately bathed and busily prepared a feast of many delicious dishes.

When the cooking was over, Bhikshu said: 'Let us eat first. Then, if necessary, we may feed the brahmanas.' Kalaka's anger knew no bounds and she irritably told Bhikshu: 'Are you not ashamed to say that we would eat first before feeding the brahmanas on this day of your father's death anniversary? Why is your brain getting rotten by the day?' She served

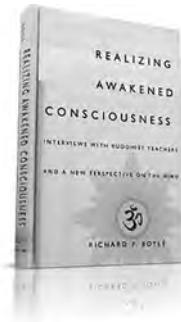
the brahmanas with devotion. Thus, Bhikshu observed his father's death anniversary by telling everything in the opposite manner. However, out of oversight he told what he really wanted: 'Take these rice offerings and put them in a clear water body.' Kalaka took them and angrily put them in a gutter. Bhikshu became angry. Nonetheless, he composed himself and continued telling the exact opposite of what he wanted: 'Do not bring back the offerings that you put in the gutter.' The next moment, Kalaka entered the gutter and brought out the offerings. Then Bhikshu told Kalaka: 'You should never put these offerings in clear water, do you understand?' Kalaka took the offerings and returned home only after she had put them in the clearest water body she could find.

*(To be concluded)*



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## **Realizing Awakened Consciousness: Interviews with Buddhist Teachers and a New Perspective on the Mind**

Richard P Boyle

Columbia University Press, 61 West, 62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2015. 368 pp. \$95. HB. ISBN 9780231170741.

Not by enmity are enmities quelled ... By the absence of enmity are they quelled, This is an ancient truth.' (*The Dhammapada*, trans. John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana (New York: Oxford University, 1998), 3). This 'ancient truth' is hard to interiorise and live out daily for it is in our natures to wish 'for an [equal] opponent ... [and to] roar / Like a hero nourished on royal food' (Gil Fronsdal, 'The Discourse to Pasūra: Not Opposing Any Views', *The Buddha before Buddhism: Wisdom from the Early Teachings* (Boulder: Shambala, 2016), 73).

The book under review teaches us through interviews and empirically how to 'quell' enmities and not bother about the ironically, useless 'royal food' of vain argumentations over one's own opinions, which one mistakenly believes to be the sumnum bonum of all truth. Richard P Boyle's book is worth studying slowly to find how to achieve what the Japanese call *ikigai*. Boyle's choice of interviewees and his observations read carefully and with respect for the Buddhist way of life, will help both the scholar, as well as the spiritual seeker to experience the Buddha-mind in the here and the now. For instance, an untrained person experiences emotions which 'are cued by stories generated by social reality, as learned during childhood', while an awakened individual's feelings 'are initiated by interoception ... [and since] there are no attachments to the

social self, most of what we usually call emotions do not exist' (285).

The Buddhist teachers interviewed by Boyle show us how to annihilate 'what we usually call emotions' and thus achieve what in another context, the Buddhist scholar Johannes Bronkhorst terms 'absorption', which both Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi loosely term as the brain in 'flow'. Reading this book and Bronkhorst's corpus, one knows that both Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi owe their concepts of 'flow' as integral to positive psychology to Buddhist mindfulness. While both Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi do not credit Buddhism for their discoveries, since both of them pass off their insights as inventions; Boyle in this book has credited Csikszentmihalyi fulsomely in his bibliography. It is important to note that without Buddhist insights into the psychic apparatus, we would not have the discipline of positive psychology as we know of it in 2019. Now then, how do we achieve the Buddha-mind or the states of 'absorption' and 'flow'?

Fronsdal, whose path-breaking book has been quoted above, came to Buddhism through his 'political' concerns with 'environmental degradation' (121) which finally led him to explore 'Daoism and Buddhism' (122). Fronsdal explains:

Even though my original reasons for sitting ceased, I kept meditating twice a day, forty minutes each time, without any conscious rationale for it. Maybe because I am rationally inclined, I thought it was bizarre that I would do something without a reason. I therefore spent a few months exploring the question, Why do I spend so much time meditating every day, without a reason? Eventually the answer that came to me was that I sat to express myself. In the same way an artist might express herself on canvas, through dance, or some other medium, meditation was the deepest, most complete form of self-expression that I knew.

As I continued to meditate in this way, my subjective experience of myself in meditation changed. The most significant change was an increased sense of personal integrity. Eventually, the contrast between the integrity I felt in meditation and the integrity I felt outside of meditation became an issue for me. Noticing this, I became interested in bringing this meditative integrity into my daily life. I continued to sit every day, without any idea that something was supposed to happen in meditation. In addition, however, I became interested in finding out how to have this inner sense of integrity or purity in the rest of my life (123).

Therefore, Fronsdal's 'absorption' into his self engendered such a powerful 'flow' that he could finally stop his inner need for wanting people to like him, for he 'saw what a burden it was to try constantly to arrange for this ... social gymnastics' (127). It was through meditation within the Zen tradition at Tassajara, California, that Fronsdal could confront his inner demons and could finally find his 'mind ... very empty, very still' (127). Through dharma practice, Fronsdal could become, as it were, one within and without. One other interview will illustrate how Boyle's book can lead us to the heart of Westerners who have embraced and enriched Buddhism, not by mere academic jingoism but by genuine practice arising from their own need to answer the hard questions of life. We are speaking here of the great Buddhist monk Ajahn Amaro:

Ever since I was a kid I'd had these concerns about freedom and truth. A big conundrum for me was how human beings can be free. We're always bound by various things, like having to follow the rules of your parents, the rules of the school, the rules of society and the judiciary and the police force. We're bound by social conventions, the force of gravity, by not having enough money to buy everything that we might want to have. Everywhere you look you see these limitations. Yet you didn't have to be very imaginative to see that even the very rich, like people who are millionaires, you could see that they are bound by all sorts of restrictions. My godfather was a millionaire, but he was not a particularly happy man. He lived in

a stately home, and he had a lot of difficulties in his life. It doesn't come down to simple things like having more cash or evading the law. So there was this question, how can we really be free? It was really because of coming across those teachings from different spiritual masters that I got the sense that these people knew what freedom was. These were free people. How did they do that? It was clear that it was some kind of internal change that we make as human beings. That was the only thing that could make us free, because it wasn't a matter of being a political leader, or being rich. It wasn't just a matter of deciding, 'I'm going to be a free person, I'm not going to worry about what people think of me. I'm just going to do whatever I like.' You could decide that as much as you wanted to, but it wouldn't work. A decision, or an intention, is not enough (74).

This conviction in Ajahn Amaro that he needed to be truly free and decisions and intentions were not enough to obtain for him this freedom, led Amaro to practise meditation. He, following the Theravada tradition, recognised his mind had become, through his own practice or effort, 'free of any kind of obstruction ... there ... [remained] no desire, there was no aversion, there was no restlessness, there was no doubt, there was no dullness ... [instead] There was a clear sense of how beautiful the mind is ... when not cluttered with obstructions' (79). In short, both Fronsdal and Amaro realised through their chosen lineages of Buddhist meditation-practice that the mind before meditation and after meditation is not the same mind. Buddhist yoga stills the various modifications of the mind.

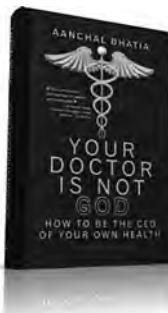
Boyle's book is thus, a testament to the power of meditation or raja yoga as taught by the ancient Sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra*. It is not for nothing that meditation is considered the best and fastest path for achieving Buddhahood in this life. One only has to read Swami Vivekananda to know how vital it is to practise meditation daily until the goal of self-realisation is achieved in the here and the now.

Boyle has done a service to humanity by first interviewing eleven meditators and then scientifically analysing the results of the interviews. Now we know that 'awakening [through meditation provides] ... ultimate relief from emotional

suffering ... [and] meditation [moreover] has positive effects on mental distress' (255). The truth that remains is that the enmity spoken of in the *Dhammapada* can be quelled through meditation-generated compassion. Once we awaken, then we need no opponents to prove the truth of our ego-claims of verities since then we know that we are empty. Empty in a good, non-pejorative way. Boyle paves the way for *pratyekabuddha-praxis*.

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### ***Your Doctor is Not God: How to be the CEO of Your Health?***

Aanchal Bhatia

Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt Ltd, DDA Complex, LSC Bldg No. 4, Second Floor, Pocket C-6-7, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070. Website: <https://www.bloomsbury.com>. 2016. xix + 187 pp. ₹299. HB. ISBN 9789385936432.

**H**ealth is a primary concern for all and apart from the natural illnesses that a person is subject to, there are innumerable traps all around in the field of medicine.

The book under review is a guidebook providing awareness, knowledge, and support around healthcare decision-making. Aanchal Bhatia cites her own experience of being wrongly treated in her young age for tuberculosis and operated for tonsillitis, while her asthma was discovered later. Also, she recounts the 'harrowing experience' during the critical illness of her father-in-law, 'when we were thrown into a situation where we had to massage a bunch of doctors' egos. ... We thought we had the best doctors in the country, and in fact we did; but little did I realise that they were not a team' (7). With her vast experience in healthcare, she points out: 'I realise now that we did not understand to what level a hospital stoops to make money or understand how the hospital's money-making machinery worked' (8).

Bhatia observes that while all ancient traditions employed natural methods for treating and healing a person as a whole, in the fast-paced world the

focus has turned towards disease and away from health, and physicians often tend to view patients as organs or diseases. Based on the facts of thorough research in the medical field, she points out: '2,25,000 deaths per year in the US ... is at the hands of poor decisions by physicians' (31). She says that these deaths are due to 'iatrogenic diseases', which are diseases due to wrong diagnosis and treatment. The bewildering pace in the growth of the medicine industry has made the situation even worse, as 'most of the marketing money is directed at the physicians who do the prescribing, rather than consumers' (34) and 'drug companies are notorious for dumping drugs that are banned in developed nations onto third world countries' (35). Summing up, Bhatia quotes a 1973 article published in *Harvard Crimson*: 'Clearly the physician cannot have the upper-hand in decision-making. We must view him as a craftsman with indispensable technical expertise, but we cannot allow him to assume the position of a God' (46).

To solve this problem, Bhatia suggests the restoration of a value system based on healing and not mere treating, by adopting the approach of metaphysics in medicine, which tries to address the complex dynamics of mind-body relationships. With her training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a clinical psychologist and experience in treating people with psychological problems, she argues that repressing unfulfilled expectations and unexpressed feelings into the subconscious mind might lead to diseases. Bhatia delineates various levels of mental blockages—material, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. These blockages lead to various kinds of problems in life as related by her along with the various stages of their manifestations. She gives a long table of the metaphysical causes of different ailments and the metaphysical significance of various body parts (150–82).

Bhatia has given suggestions for both doctors and patients to make the best use of both technology and philosophy to evolve better healthcare and a wholesome life. This is a well-researched and documented work for those who wish to take the responsibility of their health, and a must-read for those in the healthcare industry.

Swami Shantachittananda  
Associate Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*

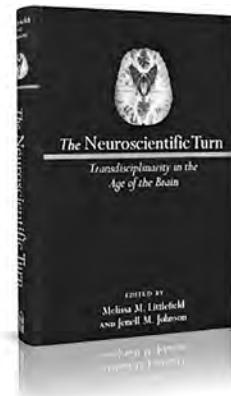
# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
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## **The Neuroscientific Turn: Transdisciplinarity in the Age of the Brain**

Melissa M Littlefield and Jenell M Johnson

The University of Michigan Press, 839, Greene Street,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan, MI 48104-3209, US. 2015. xiii  
+ 254 pp. \$80. HB. ISBN 9780472118267.



The application of neuroscience to fields beyond medicine has been characterized as revolutionary, akin to the industrial and information revolutions and evidence of the birth of a ‘neurosociety’ in which all domains of life and knowledge production are under the sign of the ‘neuro’. Each day, it seems, the popular press reports new neuroscientific findings with breathless wonder. Recent headlines have claimed that neuroscience has the power to read our minds, erase our memories, predict our propensity for violence, and alter the neural fabric of our identities. More so than any other product of the neurosciences, studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have found a particularly strong purchase in the public imagination—strong to the point where a recent advertisement for a memory-boosting supplement in the SkyMall catalog claimed it could make your brain ‘light up like a Christmas tree’, complete with a before-and-after brain scan that illustrated the product’s efficacy. Consider too, the recent proliferation of popular neuroscience on bookstore shelves, and the staggering popularity of these books for audiences who might not know a neuron from a glial cell. Books by Oliver Sacks, Antonio Damasio, V S Ramachandran, Joseph LeDoux, and Steven Pinker rapidly have become best sellers, propelling popular neuroscience into its own genre and turning scientists into superstars.

Lest this phenomenon of the ‘neuro-revolution’ appear to be the fleeting invention of popular culture, one need only look to the emergence of the many ‘neuro-disciplines’ proliferating in the academy, including but not limited to neuroeconomics, neurohistory, neuroanthropology, neuroaesthetics, neuromarketing, neurosociology, geopolitics, neuroethics, neurotheology, and even the neurohumanities. Scholars working in these burgeoning fields of inquiry come from varying disciplinary backgrounds. Some have chosen the neurosciences as a methodology while others, to borrow the cliché, have had neuroscience thrust upon them. While it is too early to say whether neuroscience has—or will—become ‘the new philosophy’ as suggested by our epigraph, the ubiquitous adoption of neuroscience by multiple fields portends a significant phase shift in interdisciplinary research that we believe can readily be understood as the neuroscientific turn.

The omnipresence of neuroscience has already begun to change the landscape of academic disciplinarity across numerous countries, including—but not limited to—the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Denmark. In large part, the widespread interest in and potential affiliations between disciplines and nations have been made possible by interdisciplinary centers and collectives. Take,

for example, the European Neuroscience and Society Network (ENSN), which was funded for five years (2007–12) by the European Science Foundation and housed at the London School of Economics BIOS Centre; the ENSN boasts over 120 affiliates from the United States, Canada, and Europe. By providing collaborative funding opportunities and interdisciplinary events (including ‘neuroschools’), the ENSN has helped to bridge gaps between the neurosciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. Scholarship produced by ENSN affiliates and other key collectives is more than interdisciplinary—it is fundamentally *transdisciplinary*. Transdisciplinarity ‘does not simply mean laying two or more disciplines next to each other. Rather, it means to set about a question simultaneously taking into account visions and methods on the same topic from seemingly different perspectives.’ Moreover, *transdisciplinarity* also points to the significant challenges researchers may encounter that arise from profound ‘differences in research methods, work styles, and epistemologies’ when scholars from radically different academic backgrounds attempt to merge their work together.

While many of the social implications of neuroscience are being addressed by scholars in neuroethics and the burgeoning field of critical neuroscience, few are addressing the *scholarly* implications posed by these new transdisciplinary partnerships: the promises as well as the difficulties. Research on ‘the science of team science’ has begun to illuminate the prospects and pitfalls for large-scale interdisciplinary research teams charged with transdisciplinary tasks. One of our goals with this collection is to open similar conversations concerning research collaborations at the dawn of this most recent turn to neuroscience. We view transdisciplinarity as ‘a process in which team members

representing different fields work together over extended periods to develop shared conceptual and methodologic frameworks that not only integrate but also *transcend their respective disciplinary perspectives*’.

This volume represents a first attempt to think historically, practically, and critically about the neuroscientific turn from the perspectives of adopters—and critics—in the humanities and social sciences, but also from the perspectives of neuroscientists themselves. Through this collection, we develop a preliminary framework for defining and theorizing the neuroscientific turn by making three arguments. First, we contend that the neuroscientific turn has a longer and more dynamic history than might be evident from the hype surrounding the emergent neurodisciplines or the earlier ‘decade of the brain’. We argue that the neuroscientific turn should be understood contextually, via precursors that date back to the nineteenth century and beyond. In part I of the collection, a genealogy of these antecedents challenges the novelty, and thus the very definition, of this latest ‘neurorevolution’.

Our second—and related—argument is that neuroscience is a translational discipline: a set of methods and/or theories that has become transferable—sometimes problematically so—to other disciplines. We contend that the complexity of the brain and its centrality in most human endeavors ought to be reflected in equally complex, multifaceted modes of inquiry, perhaps best facilitated by transdisciplinary conversations. ... Thus, this collection provides the opportunity for diverse fields to speak with and alongside one another; for this reason, we hope to present our vision of the ideal neuroscientific turn as a collaborative project rather than a vestigial outgrowth of the neurosciences or a return to biologism.



# REPORTS

## ***Unveiling of Sister Nivedita Statue***

At the initiative of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, a **bronze statue of Sister Nivedita** was installed at her family cemetery in Great Torrington, United Kingdom, and was unveiled on 27 July 2019. The Government of West Bengal funded the project, and our devotees and admirers in the UK extended support for this endeavour. Among others, the function was attended by Swami Sarvasthananda, head of Bourne End centre, UK, and Swami Sarvapriyananda, head of the Vedanta Society of New York.

## ***Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA***

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **In India:** **Almora:** (i) A statue of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled at Kakrighat on 15 July, followed by a public meeting. The programme was jointly held by Almora centre and Vivekananda Seva Samiti, Kakrighat. (ii) A statue of Swamiji was unveiled at Vivekananda Corner, near Almora centre on 16 July. The programme was jointly organised by Almora centre and the Nagar Palika Parishad. (iii) On 16 July, prizes were awarded to the winners in the cultural competitions that the centre had conducted earlier. About 400 people attended the programme. **Baranagar Math:** Four lecture programmes between 25 May and 12 July, which were attended by about 400 students in all. **Coimbatore Mission:** Cultural competitions at 8 schools and colleges in and around Coimbatore from 21 March to 20 July. In all, 1,338 students took part in the competitions. At all the venues,



*Unveiling of Sister Nivedita Statue at Great Torrington, UK*

the competitions were followed by a talk, an awards-ceremony, and a skit. **Guwahati:** A devotees' convention on 29 June attended by 167 people. **Lucknow:** A public meeting on 4 July in which Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, addressed the gathering. **Mangaluru:** Lecture programmes in 4 colleges in the month of July, which were attended by 2,560 youths in all. **Shyamla Tal:** A motivational workshop on 29 June, which was attended by 46 students and others. **Silchar:** Lecture programmes at 10 places in Cachar district from 17 June to 2 July, which were attended by about 5,000 students and 100 teachers from 30 schools and colleges. **Taki:** Lecture programmes in 7 schools in the month of July, which were attended by a total of 1,029 youths. **Tamluk:** Cultural competitions in 27 schools of Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur districts from January to July in which nearly 3,000 students took part. Following the competitions, public meetings were held in each school and were attended by about 11,000 students and teachers in all. On 10 July, the final round of the competitions was held and the winners were awarded prizes. **Outside India: Dhaka, Bangladesh:** A public meeting in Mirpur, Dhaka, on 7 July, which was attended by 1,000 people. **Durban, South Africa:** Six devotees' conventions and three music programmes between 23 May and 7 July, which were attended by 732 people in all.

## ***News of Branch Centres (in India)***

On the sacred occasion of Ratha Yatra on 4 July,

**Puri Math** conducted a medical camp from 4 to 12 July in which 1,103 patients were treated. The Math also served lemonade to about 13,000 pilgrims.

**Puri Mission** Ashrama served lemonade to 12,200 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra festival. A medical camp was also set up in which about 200 patients received medical aid.

The 14th foundation day celebration and the annual convocation of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (**RKMVERI**), deemed university, were held on the university's Belur campus on 4 July. Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who is also the Chancellor of the university, presided over the programme and conferred the degrees and diplomas to the successful candidates. In another welcome development, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has categorised **RKMVERI** as a grade-I institution. This categorisation facilitates the university's initiatives such as opening off-campus centres and starting distance-learning programmes.

**Kamarpukur** centre recently purchased a portion of the sacred 'mango orchard of Manik Raja' in Kamarpukur, a place frequented by Sri Ramakrishna in his childhood. In a programme held on 4 July to mark the acquisition of the land, a number of mango saplings were planted there.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the second floor of the boys' hostel of our **Jhargram** school on 4 July. In a commendable achievement, a tribal student of our **Jhargram** school who passed the higher secondary examination this year has secured admission in the Indian Institute of Technology, Patna.

Sri Pratap Chandra Sarangi, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises; and Ministry of Animal Husbandry,

Dairying, and Fisheries, Government of India, visited **Bhubaneswar** centre on 20 July.

Swami Gautamanandaji inaugurated the following two halls at **Chennai Math** on 26 July: (i) Swami Yatishwarananda Hall attached to the library, and (ii) Swami Tapasyananda Hall for conducting welfare programmes among leprosy-afflicted persons.

**Agartala** centre conducted a blood donation camp on 17 July in which 29 persons donated blood. Sri Jishnu Dev Varma, Deputy Chief Minister of Tripura, inaugurated the camp.

**Chandipur** Math held a medical check-up camp for cleft-lip patients on 7 July in which 28 patients were examined.

**Guwahati** centre conducted a medical camp at Hajo in Kamrup district of Assam on 26 July in which 450 patients were treated.

**Rahara** Boys' Home held two multi-disciplinary medical camps in North 24 Parganas and East Bardhaman districts on 9 and 23 June. In all, 1,324 patients were treated in the camps.

### ***Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)***

**Mangaluru** Ashrama conducted these activities in June: (i) four cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving 1,850 volunteers, (ii) awareness campaigns for 23 days in which volunteers reached out to 1,350 households in different parts of Mangaluru city, spreading awareness about waste management, (iii) cleanliness drives in 182 villages of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, (iv) magic shows on the cleanliness theme in 42 schools in Udupi district, and (v) cultural competitions on the cleanliness theme in 130 schools, 13,100 students took part.

### ***Relief***

**Flood Relief: Assam:** **Guwahati** centre distributed 875 kg chira (rice flakes), 170 kg

gur (molasses), 117 litres milk, 1,256 packets of biscuits, 738 saris, 552 dhotis, 200 lungis, 850 mosquito-nets, 400 kg detergent powder, 300 packets of candles, and 300 lighters among 861 families in Baksa, Darrang, Goalpara, Karbi Anglong, and Morigaon districts from 14 to 28 July. The centre also conducted a medical camp in Kamrup district and provided assistance to 450 patients on 26 July.

**Cyclone Relief:** (i) **Gujarat: Rajkot** centre distributed 5,300 packets of snacks from 12 to 16 June among people who had taken shelter in government-run relief camps in Rajkot, Morbi, and Gir Somnath districts as a precautionary measure against the Cyclone Vayu. (ii) **Odisha: Puri Mission** continued its relief work in the wake of the Cyclone Fani, which had hit the state in the month of May. The centre distributed 2,000 saris and an equal number of lungis, towels, and mosquito-nets among 2,000 families in Puri district from 18 to 27 July.

**Drought Relief:** **Maharashtra:** Continuing its drought relief work, **Aurangabad** centre distributed 10.20 lakh litres of water in 13 villages of Aurangabad district from 5 June to 30 July.

**Distress Relief:** The following centres distributed these items to needy people: **India:** (a) **Aalo:** 202 shirts, 131 trousers, 95 jackets, and 131 sweaters on 10 July. (b) **Belgharia:** 2,000 shirts, 1,459 sweaters, and cut pieces of cloth for 10 shirts and 10 trousers on 25 June. (c) **Chapra:** 1,000 shirts and 1,000 trousers from 25 June to 21 July. (d) **Davanagere:** 10,250 notebooks, 566 geometry boxes, 5,000 pens, and 3,000 pencils from 1 to 7 July. (e) **Ghatshila:** 892 T-shirts and 108 shirts from 9 April to 18 June. (f) **Hatamuniguda:** 1,400 notebooks, 140 pens, 140 pencils, 140 erasers, and 140 pencil sharpeners on 19 July. (g) **Koyilandy:** 10 saris, 478 blankets, and 350 kg rice from 3 to 27 July. (h) **Limbdi:** 225 school uniforms and a water cooler on 2



*Handover of Anganwadis to the Government of Kerala*

July. (i) **Thiruvalla:** 26,221 notebooks, 2,685 geometry boxes, and 94 T-shirts from 11 May to 3 July. **Outside India: Sri Lanka:** **Batticaloa** sub-centre: 11,825 notebooks among 3,000 poor students of 23 schools and 11 fans to 3 schools between May and July. **Zambia: Lusaka:** 100 kg powdered maize on 10 July.

**Drought Rehabilitation:** **Rahara** centre sunk a tube-well in South 24 Parganas district on 8 December.

**Distress Rehabilitation:** **Rahara** centre distributed 5 tricycles, 2 wheelchairs, 5 folding sticks, 1 crutch, and 5 hearing aids among 18 differently-abled people on 16 July.

**Flood Rehabilitation:** **Kerala:** (i) The **Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters** built, through **Kochi** centre, eight *anganwadis*, childcare centres, in Alappuzha district. The *anganwadis* were handed over to the Government of Kerala in a programme held on 20 July. (ii) **Thiruvalla** centre helped 8 flood-affected families to repair and renovate their houses in Idukki, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha districts from 9 March to 20 July.

**Economic Rehabilitation:** Under self-employment programme, the following centres distributed necessary items, shown against their names, to poor and needy people in their respective areas: (a) **Chandipur:** 1 sewing machine on 19 July. (b) **Guwahati:** 2 sewing machines on 1 July. (c) **Ponnampet:** 64 honey collection boxes and 54 sewing machines from 8 to 22 June. (d) **Ramanathapuram:** 32 sewing machines on 21 April and 12 July.

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Burbank, California Asim Chaudhuri  
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*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

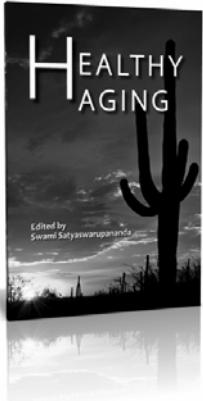
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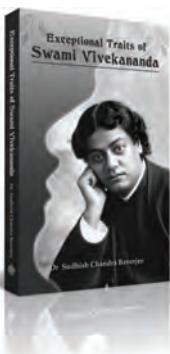


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## PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



### Thakur and Maa Visit Siddheswari Kali Bagbazaar II

Both Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother separately visited the Bagbazar Siddheswari Kali Mandir on many occasions. Thakur used to come to this temple when he stayed in Baghbazar. He told Upendranath Mukherjee, who was poor at the time, "Open, go and pray to Her—she will grant your desires." Later on, Open became very rich and the owner of Basumati Press. Thakur also told others, "She is Siddheswari Ma—this means that whatever you pray from your innermost heart she will fulfill!" Holy Mother has an interesting connection with this temple. During the Durga Puja in 1896, Holy Mother was then staying on the third floor of a rented house in Bagbazar. Its first floor was a turmeric warehouse and the second floor was occupied by Holy Mother's male attendants. Attendant Kumudbandhu Sen, a devotee recalled: 'During Durga Puja Asthami day, the monks and devotees bowed down to Holy Mother and offered flowers at her feet. While we were waiting on the second floor M. arrived. Golap-ma called out, "Those who want to see the Mother, please come." One by one, we went upstairs with flowers and offered them at her feet. But M. remained on the second floor. I asked, "Master Mahashay, will you not go to see the Mother?" Smiling, he



replied, "I have already seen her." Surprised I said: "Well, you have just come now. When did you see her?" He replied softly, "In the Siddheswari Kali temple in Baghbazar." I replied, "Mother did not go there. I have been here since yesterday." M. again said, "I have seen her there." He then began to sing: "Can one be joyless if one's Mother is blissful? The Divine Mother keeps

Her child in bliss in this world and the next." Swami Basudevananda narrated another interesting incident: When the Mother was in Udbodhan, she used to drink the charanamrita [holy water] of the Master after the worship. One day someone brought the charanamrita of Siddheswari Kali at Baghbazar and I carried both to her in two different containers.

She was on the veranda and asked what I had brought. I said, "Two kinds of charanamrita in two containers." She said: "Both are the same. Mix them together." I replied, "All right, I shall do so from tomorrow." She gravely said: "No, mix them together right now." Immediately I mixed them and the Mother drank the charanamrita. Then, with a smile, she put her hand on my head and blessed me. During Mother's last illness, Swami Saradanadna arranged the recitation of the Chandi at the Siddheswari temple in Baghbazar for nearly two weeks in the hopes that Mother may recover. Finally, Girish Ghosh called Siddheswari Ma in Bengali, '*Ginni Ma*' which literally means 'head of the household', and used to offer any new plays to her first.

*In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar –Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar*

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*The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda



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